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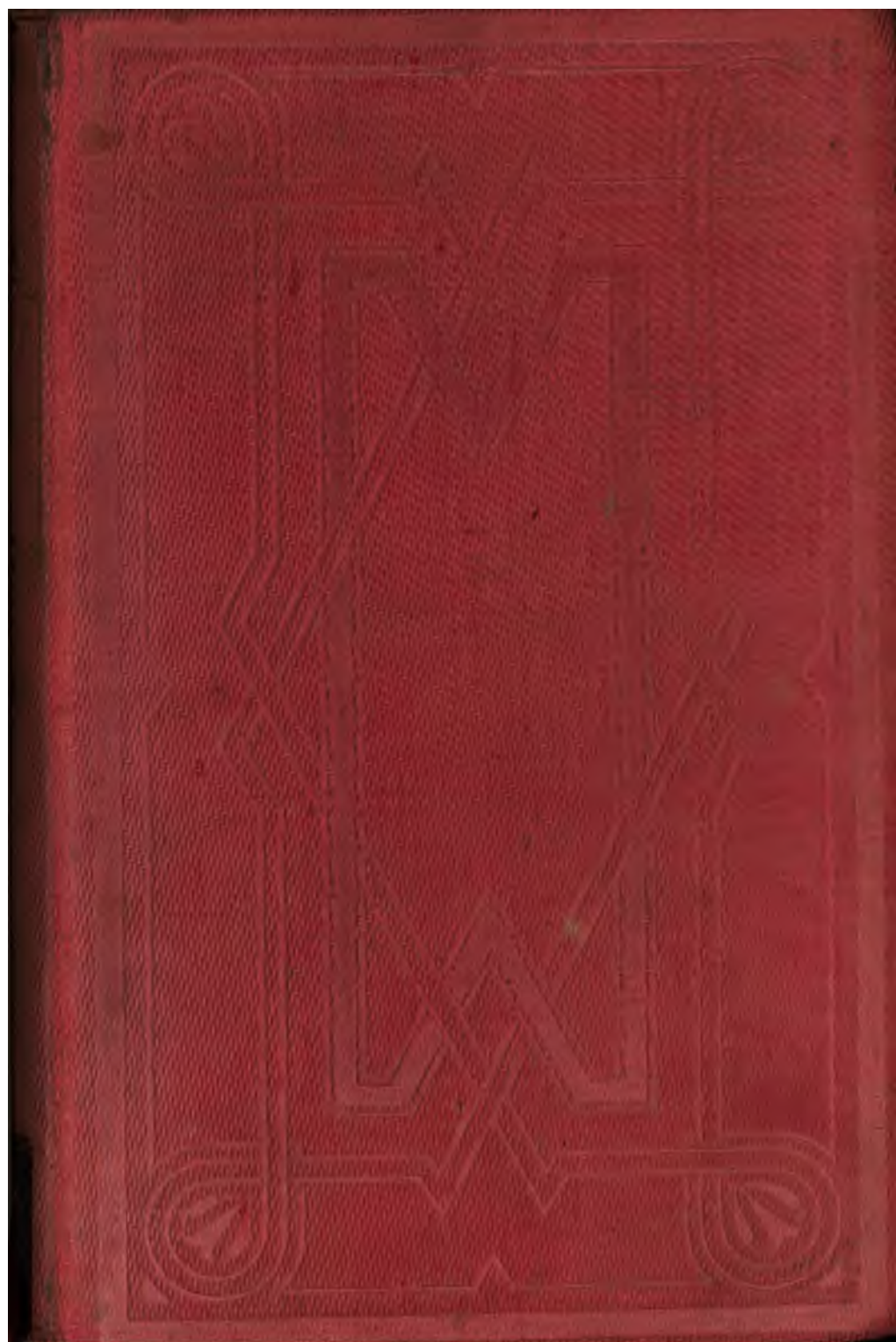
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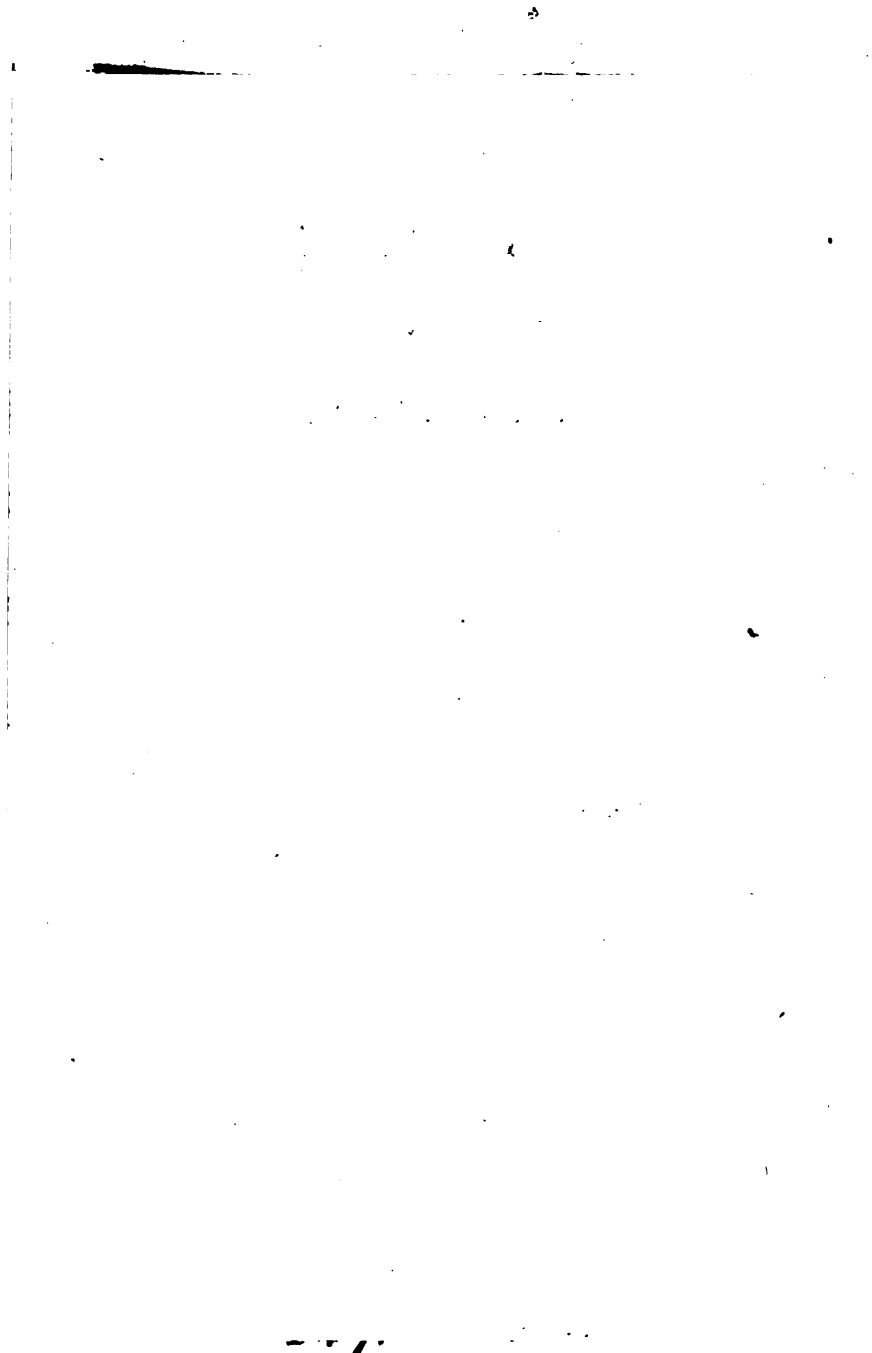
BLIGHT;

OR,

THE NOVEL HATER.



THE NOVEL HATER.





BLIGHT;
OR
THE NOVEL HATER.

A Tale of our Own Times.

BY THE AUTHOR OF
"GOOD IN EVERYTHING," ETC., ETC.

To trim Heaven's lamp of Genius is no "creature task;"
'Tis an inspired and a spell-wrought act
To humanize the Ideal. Raise thou the mask
Of fairy FICTION, and reveal the FACT.

VOL. I.

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PREFACE.

QUESTION: How is it that Authors, be they male or female—but especially those of the latter sex—are, in their early years, nine times out of ten, (to use an ugly phrase) “snubbed?”—

ANSWER: How is it?—Why, reader, I can hardly tell; but this fact I do know, that it is that very snubbing which *makes* many authors in after years; while some there are whose hearts will not stand the chill nipping, but who go down to their graves like untimely fruit, or flowers which would have bloomed, but that their young buds were crushed and *blighted*.

QUESTION: How is it, that while in some families the treasury of talent just opening is hailed with due rapture, as “the gift of God,”

"the pearl above price,"—it is in others alike despised and dispelled—the magic brush, the poetic breathing, the eye soul-lit with many an untold tale, shadowy dawnings of future greatness, glorious tokens of the Great Giver, are met with contempt—ay, and sometimes bitter irony?

ANSWER: Envy may have something to do with it; but the world's ways are problems difficult to solve.

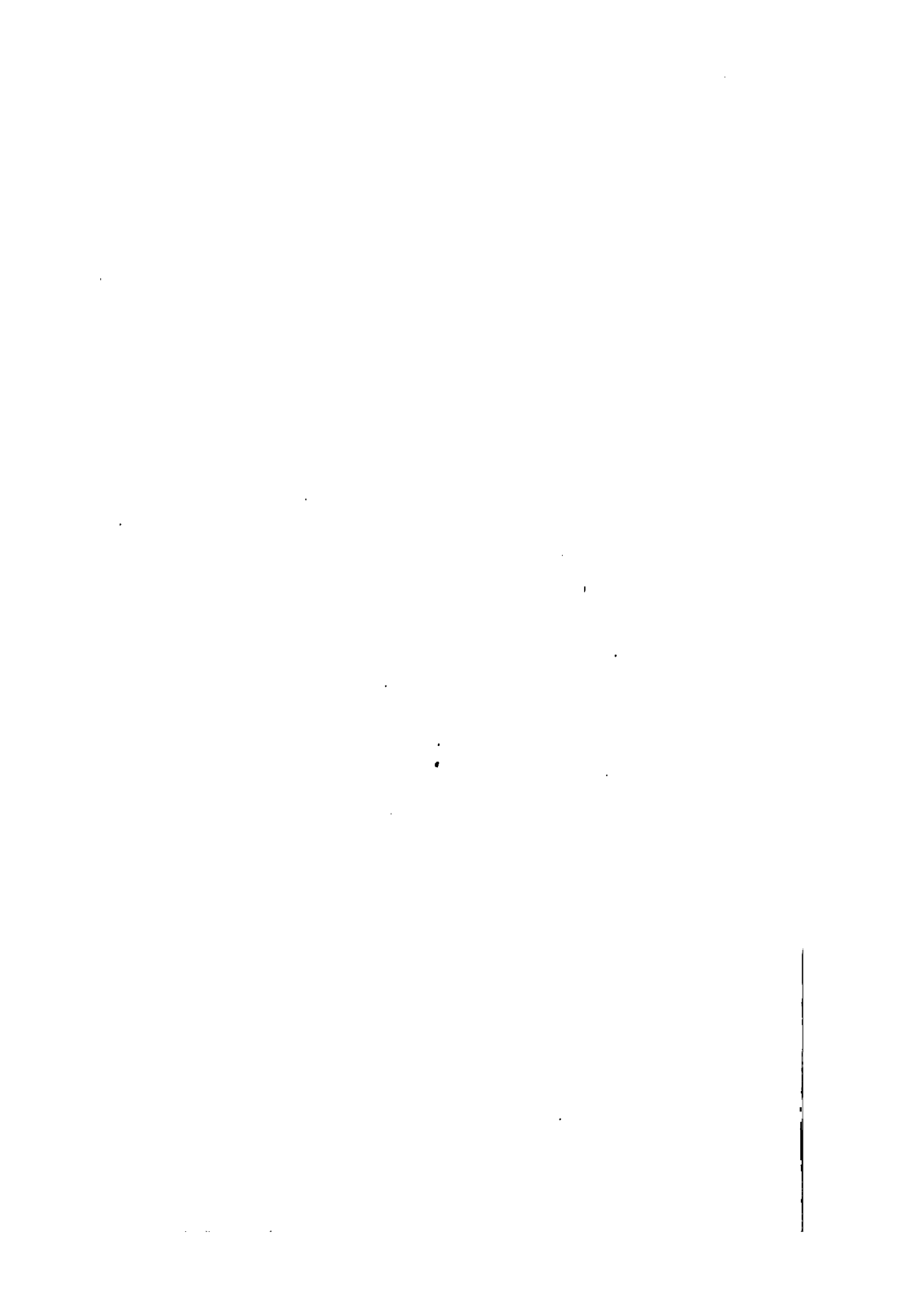
This is a work of Fiction, although some of the characters and incidents are drawn from life.—Perhaps there are many (besides those who scornfully denounce all novels, because they bear that name) may cast aside Fiction as an idle thing. Still, there are very few who will not admit that there is truth even in this Fiction—few who have not felt the nipping hand of *Blight* at some period or other in their past career—drying up a goodly flowing fountain of heart's affection or worldly gain—chilling a warm and kind intention—overthrowing a noble purpose—a high resolve—cankering for ever a festering wound—dimming a bright prospect, or check-

ing a generous impulse.—Few, very few, who cannot find some traces of its ravages in many a leaf withered on life's highway!

Before commencing this history of "Life's trials and affections," I must apologize for the errors of "Good in Everything," (or "Tide") my former work. Owing to a long and very severe illness, I was unable to look over the proof-sheets of my former work, "Good in Everything," as they passed through the press; the consequence was, that not only were numerous paragraphs of the work most incorrectly given, but the greater portion of several chapters altogether omitted. Sincerely do I regret being compelled to allude to this matter at all, but the errors and misprints being many, and some of them so extremely glaring, as deeply to affect my reputation as its author, this statement I conceive to be necessary before "Blight" should be submitted for the perusal, and let me hope the approval, of the reading world.

ROSE FOOT.

ALDBURY HOUSE, CHESHUNT, HERTS.



BLIGHT.

CHAPTER I.

"A Novel, eh? Bah!—trash!

————— A fool's dream!"

"As thou wilt—pray what is life?"—

Old Drama.

"Ay, flowers the earth has blighted, still drink
heaven's dew in dreams."

EVENING shadows now fell on the village of Doverton. The hum of many voices ceased, and the sounds of distant merriment, borne on the air in joyous echoes, died away with the sun, which a short hour before had shed a halo over the busy scene, and streaked the old church tower with gold.

Doverton was formerly a wild-looking little territory, with its strangely-clad uncouth inhabitants, and their rudely-

constructed dwellings ; and although, when our tale commences, it bore strong marks of the renovator's hand, still, like some few places of its kind, it had not "kept pace with the times," but retained so much of its originality that one could imagine it had been left by the "Great Wheel" to repose for half a century.

It was not a large, but a straggling, village, consisting of one long, irregular street, from which branched off numerous thoroughfares ; those on the one side leading up to the open country, and commanding in their progress a bold and extensive view.

In those thoroughfares were many neat cottages and homes of a superior class ; but in those on the other side of the main street, chiefly occupied by people engaged in commercial pursuits, the houses were of quite a different description. At first, the cottages and their occupants appeared cleanly and decent in their poverty, but the aspect of both changed susceptiblely as you proceeded : the trim air of order was no longer perceivable ; rough-looking men, in sailors' garb, lounged

about the doorways, smoking short foul pipes, and using language of a still fouler description; dirty women trolloped about with wretched children in their arms, half-clad and half-fed.

These narrow windings of misery terminated within a mile and a half, or perhaps two miles, of the sea-shore. The land here was sterile and desolate, and its barrenness was alone broken by here and there a patch of rude vegetation, formed by one or two of the more industrious of this depraved-looking community. Two of these streets or passages, after taking an irregular course, united in a common outlet, while the other, of a somewhat more favourable character, wound away in a contrary direction. At the point where the two roads met, the wayfarer might discern written up before him, on the begrimed wall, in letters almost defaced by time and dirt, "Join-way Place;" but this appellation had long ago subsided into "Gin Way,"—one more appropriate and congenial to its *gin-drinking* inhabitants.

Just as the evening shadows were descend-

ing, a youth of an appearance at strange variance with the place and its denizens, emerged from the village by the "Gin Way," and, with a step and bearing that at a glance bespoke the gentleman, proceeded to the waste land previously described. At first sight the figure would strike the observer as fragile; he appeared not to have arrived at the full height of manhood; but he was firmly knit and manly in his gait, though slim withal, and his hat, or rather cap, was pulled over a brow stamped with no common intellect, but his features were but dimly seen in the approaching dusk. As he neared the scraps of land alluded to, where cabbages, potatoes, and such necessities of life had been reared, he paused in his quiet walk, and finally stopped, apparently undecided which path to take, for two were before him—one straight on, and another to the left. It was evident the road was not very familiar to him, and after gazing for some seconds in silence, he ruminated, "Straight on must be the nearest, though, if I remember rightly, it's terribly rugged; but I must get on to the sea, and look at it in this calm

light, and anyhow I don't think it will take longer than going round by the cliff."

As he spoke, and was about to pass on still more quickly than before, the sound of a child's scream from the other roadway arrested his attention, and pausing, he could trace in the distance the outline of a horse and cart, with one man seated in it, and another at the side, seemingly struggling with some object; and the scream being repeated still louder, induced him to change his resolution, and hasten to the spot from whence the sound proceeded.

But before following his footsteps, we must, with the reader's permission, retrace them to the village, to learn by what chance we found him issuing from "Gin Way," a locality to which few would have resorted from choice. Some half-hour before, he had been seated in the small circulating library of Doverton, searching carefully amongst the many volumes scattered on the counter before him. It would seem, however, that he had been waiting for something, for the shopman, returning from a survey at his door, announced respectfully that the car-

rier's cart was now in sight. This cart was of great importance to the residents of Doverton, for, from the large town of M——, ten miles distant, it was usually the bearer, not only of many packages, but also sundry pieces of intelligence from the metropolis, and many a bit of food for scandal from the good old town itself, to be commented upon and enlarged according to the pleasure of the gossip-loving and idle among the villagers, of which there were, as in every other place of a similar kind, a goodly number.

The carrier was no sooner seen slowly approaching the library, where he always stopped before making his way to the inn, than a motley group clustered around him to be first to hear "the news." But Dick Wakeful seemed in no humour to satisfy their curiosity. Indeed, he seldom delivered himself of any of his voluble burden until snugly ensconced before the tap-room fire, with his jug of ale and pipe before him; and it was only the rather unusual question of "Any news?" from Mr. Deerson, the master of the library, that called forth the commencement of a very prosy description

of some entertainment held at the M—— “Scientific and Literary Institution”—which was used as occasion required for all kinds of amusements. A short time before there had been some wild beasts exhibited there; lately, a ventriloquist (a wonder of the world!); and finally, some savages and a dwarf, upon which the carrier was now descanting.

But the young man who had, with an absent mind, been turning over the leaves of a volume since the cart had arrived, now laid it down, and rising impatiently, demanded, “Has it come, Deerson?”

He received a small parcel from the hands of that person, resembling books in size and shape, and saying “Good evening,” looked at his watch, and hurried on his way. He had not walked many paces, however, before a man leaning on a crutch passed him very slowly; and though twilight was imperceptibly blending with night, it did not conceal from the youth that the man was deadly pale, and seemingly in great pain.

“Can I assist you?” were the quick and natural words of his heart.

"Thank you, young gentleman," responded the man, in a voice scarcely audible.

"Take my arm with your other hand, then—do not hurry," added the other, seeing that the poor man endeavoured to hasten his weary pace.

"*You* are in a hurry," answered the man, but in a voice so low that the young gentleman was obliged to bend his head to hear him.

"*I was* in a hurry," he replied, "but never mind me. Do you live down here? Do not speak. Ah! that is your mother, I think, at the door. I have heard Mr. Greenhill, our good rector, speak of you often. I think your name is Stephens. You should not venture too far in your weak state; you might be attacked again when none are by to render aid."

They had arrived at one of a small row of houses, and the old woman at the door, thanking the young gentleman for his kindness to her "poor Ned," as she called him, took her son tenderly by the arm and led him into the house. His guide followed,

and after making a few kind inquiries of the mother, put a half-crown into her hand, and saying "It was getting late," asked if it was nearer to go round by the cliffs to "Sea View," by following the direction he was in, than by going back through the village and along the high road. The woman informed him, that "It was certainly nearer. But, sir," said she, "Windmill Street is all very well up here, indeed till you get to the 'Crowbar'; but after that it is hardly fit for a young gentleman like you to walk through, and you'll have to go right through Gin Way, sir."

"It will not be the first time, my good woman, that I have been there; but it is some time ago now, and I returned by the same way I came. You stare," he continued, with a smile. "I went to take a 'copy of a child's head,' and a fine study it was. You know, we painters little care for places or appearances. But good night; the time is getting on."

"Excuse me, sir," said the woman; "but you come from Dr. Thornton's, I think? You have, indeed, a long way to walk, and I

won't detain you. I have often heard of your beautiful paintings, sir."

But she ceased, for she was alone, the gentleman having hastily advanced upon his way.

And now, as we have seen, for the second time, his progress was impeded when he reached the two roads on the dreary-looking land beyond Gin Way. A call on humanity appeared to find a ready response in his breast; for, as the cries of the child increased, his quick walk soon changed into a run, whither we will now follow him.

"What are you doing with that child?" were his first breathless words.

"Why, bless your honour, I'm only a-pacifying of her!" answered the younger and less ferocious-looking of the two men, while the other (who still kept his place in the cart for the very good reason that he was too tipsy to get out of it) bawled out, "What jackanapes are you?"

"Hold your jaw, you fool!" cried his companion, jumping into the cart beside him.

"Oh, my jug! Oh, the beer!" shrieked

the child at the top of her voice; and she was so ungovernable in her grief that the youth, who was endeavouring to gain a little understanding into what had taken place, could not for some moments make anything out of her statement; and it was not till after the cart had rattled away with the two men, shouting with laughter, that she could be brought to anything like reason, and, amidst much sobbing, explain, "that she had been to the 'Gull' to fetch a jug of ale for her grandfather, and those two wicked men had stopped her, drank all the beer, and broken the jug.

"What shall I do—what shall I do!" she cried. "The money's all gone for the beer, and it's no use going back for more. Mrs. D——'ll say I drank it myself, and tell grandfather; and oh, the jug! the jug!"

"But who is your grandfather, and where do you live? Why, the 'Gull' is no place for you, surely," observed the young man.

The "Gull" was a small public-house, of extremely bad repute, very desolately situated about half a mile from the shore. Dacey, the present possessor, professed to earn his

livelihood by serving the poor fishermen and sailors on the coast with beer and spirits, not omitting tobacco; but it was suspected that he resorted to other modes of gaining a maintenance, and if not, as report had whispered, actually a smuggler himself, he had been frequently a sharer in transactions of a plundering kind. His wife, who in her early days had been a respectable servant-girl, had fallen into a miserable slattern, both in manners and appearance. Such were the tenants of the "Gull."

"It is the only place near, sir, where we can get beer. We live so lonesome-like down over there."

"What! in one of those two solitary huts on the beach! I remember them."

"They aren't so bad inside, sir. Brother Ben painted them in the spring. Grandfather built them a great many years ago, he says, and they were in one then, till grandmother died, and then grandfather made them into two, when Aunt Bess and the 'Silly Lady,' came."

"'Lady!' a lady live down there?"

"She calls herself 'My Lady.' But, oh,

what shall I do !” and the poor child began to wring her hands and sob again.

“ I will give you the money for the beer, so leave off crying, and make haste to get it, for you must have come out of your way, I think.”

“ Those bad men told me at the ‘ Gull,’ to get along this road, as far as I could, and that when they came up to me they would give me something, all gold and silver.”

“ You should not have listened to them ; you must be a mile out of your way.”

“ No, sir,” said the child ; “ that way,” pointing to a narrow footpath just before them, “ leads down to the shore. But I should have been home before now if I had gone straight down from the Gull,” added she.

“ Where does that road, yonder, lead ?” asked the gentleman.

“ That goes right away by Maynard’s mill, into the high road, and up to Sea View.”

“ Oh ! I see now where I am, these roads confused me ; there is the money,” continued he, putting sixpence into the child’s hand.

“ Oh, sir, do come with me ; she will never believe me, and she won’t lend me a tankard or anything—I hate her ! she’s so cross.”

"Well, quick, then. I will wait outside for you, and you can tell her I will pay for the loan of a jug or tankard. I hope it is not far round, for I have a long walk before me."

"Oh, you are good, indeed, sir," exclaimed the child.

The moon had risen, and illumed their onward path, also the little face turned up towards his so wistfully, but neither the words nor the look accompanying them seemed to make that impression upon one apparently so sensitive to the voice of distress, and so easily moved to a generous impulse, as might have been imagined. It was true that those upraised eyes had no particular beauty in them, and the countenance altogether was not one to rivet the attention, but the expression was that of simple, yet deep-felt thankfulness: it would have spoken plainly to many hearts, "You have acted a good part, and brought down upon your head the 'blessing of the afflicted,' even a child's blessing, to whom you have administered 'light and joy.'" But in this instance it made no such appeal; it was

scarcely observed by her companion, who imagined that he had but fulfilled an act of duty, and he relapsed into silent reserve—it would seem to be his habitual mood. The child prattled away, artlessly as children will, as they walked side by side, although but little attention was paid to her remarks in general; and only once,—when she expressed additional sorrow at the loss of the beer, on account of the “silly lady, whom she feared Aunt Bessy would have put to bed without it, if the lady began to scream, as she knew she would, because it did not come, for grandfather had promised her some,”—did she arouse her companion from his apathy, who enquired who this silly lady was, and how she came to live with them.

“Aunt Bessy brought her; her name is Lady Vernon,” was all the child could tell.

At last they turned off by a by-path from the road, and began rapidly to descend to a part where the cliffs seemed riven widely asunder. The declivity was sudden, and the way rugged. There were large pieces of the cliff and fragments of rock which would entirely exclude any abode there might be

from the eyes of any person on the road above, and he whose steps we are tracing, on looking back could perceive nothing but these large craggy masses and the starry sky above him. The scene struck the beholder as wild and grand. There lay the bold ocean beneath him, glittering and dancing in the silvery rays. The very waves seemed hushed into harmony with the hour ; and the myriad stars above, in the dark blue heavens, told of a rest more truthful still—eternal there. Felt by the soul, as a soft curtain drawn to mock the anxious scenes of day, and welcome night or evening thoughtfulness.

The child had turned into an angle and disappeared before he was aware of it—so deeply was he absorbed in the silent grandeur of Nature's magnificence around him ; and, as he turned the point whither the child had led, he perceived the "Gull," seated snugly in a nook before him, and exclaimed aloud, "What a spot for a haunt of vice ! it ought to be swept away with all those belonging to it !" It did certainly appear like desecration on such a night, and

in such an hour, to hear those coarse oaths and that drunken laughter—the companions of vice and crime.

The stranger appeared, indeed, an ardent lover of the beautiful, as for some ten minutes after he was still seen standing on the beach alone, like one spell-bound; the child had gone on, eagerly and thankfully towards her home. “It would be superb,” was his soliloquy, “if I could only carry it *here*!” pushing back his cap and touching a forehead which shone broad and lofty in the moon’s light. His features were almost faultless in their regularity, but the expression was forbidding and almost repulsive in its cold and haughty reserve; and the small piercing eyes which had kindled with admiration at the glorious scene spread like a map before him, grew withering in their contemptuous meaning as, still pressing his hand to his brow, as if to imbibe the power he sought, he repeated, “Ah, if I could carry it *here*!”

“But what brush could portray that transparent silvery light—those waves—those

stars? Memory and power alike would fail. Power! What power is given to the hand of man? A cheat, a mockery, all! His very senses go just far enough to tantalize him, and then leave the wretch to writhe in the mire, like the very reptile whose kindred he becomes." Still did his eye fall fascinated on that beauteous scene; but neither did the calm sweet murmur of the ocean as it rolled on in its appointed course, nor the holy stillness of the cool soft air, shedding balmy influence above and below, inhale him with that soothing breath of peace and of repose which ever steals into the breast of the man who, "while he admires, adores,"—into that heart which, while beating in transport for "things created," can vibrate with love and praise for their "great Creator, too." But it was with an artistic eye alone he gazed on nature, as then furnishing grand subjects for the work of his hand—of man's hand—whose limited power he had so deplored; not on nature's God, whose objects he contemplated with so much enthusiasm, drinking in with avidity each shade of colouring,

that he might treasure the remembrance in his eager brain—the brain God had given him; and while complaining thus bitterly of the limits of memory, he forgot the rich gift and the talent that had been planted there. And when at length, moodily pursuing his way, the words escaped him, “What can the poor wretch be made for?” they should have been rather, “What is man, O Lord, that Thou shouldst be mindful of him!” It is an awful sight to see in one with whom the impulse of moral good is so predominant, either through circumstances, or education, or the darkened workings of that unaccountable thing, the “human heart,” an “unbelieving and rebellious spirit.” They were strange words, and spoken strangely for one so young—a dangerous creed!

He had pulled his cap over his brow again as he neared the cottages, or rather hovels; but they did not look so wo-begone or poverty-stricken by this soft light as they did at noon-day. The cliff receded far enough back to admit of a piece of garden-

ground behind each, in which clothes and fish were hung to dry in strange medley ; and small plots were railed in, in front, where a few autumn flowers bloomed, in spite of their near proximity to the briny element.

As the observer stopped to take note of these things, a strong desire possessed him to see the interior of one of these rude dwellings. Perhaps the words of the child regarding the "silly lady" recurred to his mind and induced him to follow his inclination, for "curiosity" was a novel feeling with him. He climbed the precipitous ascent leading to the two cabins, and stepping noiselessly across the little garden of the first, he cautiously approached the small window, through which a light was dimly visible. In that humble room sat the "lady," and although a worn and tattered shawl enveloped her form, and her hair hung dishevelled on her shoulders, the title of "lady" was claimed both by features and form. She was seated on a low stool close to the grate. It was early in autumn, but the evening was chill, and she seemed

to feel it so, for she crouched close to the blaze, on which her eyes were fixed in pensive reverie. In that face there were the remains of surpassing loveliness. It told of woe, long suffering, patience, endurance, and silent despair. She might have been taken for thirty, or perhaps younger; but in reality she was some years older. Well might the beholder pause to contemplate!—for beauty, in things animate or inanimate, had for him an all-powerful charm. It was fresh food for his skill; and again was he riveted to the spot. “What a splendid—!” burst from his lips; but the unguarded sentence was broken by a yell so shrill and sudden that it sent the blood back from his heart, and his feet some paces from the window. He surmised she had heard him, for the eyes bent down so pensively before, were now raised with a sudden flash of energy, and the features, from their quiet calm, were distorted into wild excitement. But in her frenzy she was as striking to the beholder, and would have attracted him equally to remaining where he

was, but, for prudence, he had withdrawn on one side, thereby stealing a glance only at intervals. She had not moved from her seat, and in a few moments relapsed again into her former attitude of deep and silent grief. Once, for one moment, the spirit of him who watched was roused—the better spirit above the lower earthly one—to call some one in the next cabin to come to the poor maniac, or to do his best to soothe her himself; but in the next, the ray of light had gone, and he murmured, “Poor creature! her joys and sorrows at least are over; she cannot be annoyed by the pettifogging dull brutes around her. Brutes! what are we all?”

That youth was a strange compound of good and evil. He was, as we have seen, keenly alive to the cries of the needy, *but he did not love his kind*; he looked down upon all with the same feeling of contempt and aversion as he did upon himself, and nourished the same pity for them, for their capabilities and their very existence. Perhaps there was “*one*” in the world, in the narrow circum-

ference of his world, who could stir the depths of that loftier spirit within him, and cause a question—a pause for higher thought, upon his darkened way—a cry of “stop!” as in those fits of abstraction his sentiments would fall in together and take a double range; and while within himself debating upon, and oftentimes wantonly abusing, the “existence of the body,” he would even go so far as to doubt the “immortality of the soul!” but that silent spell upon the chords of his heart would stay, as with a touch, the frightful torrent of his thoughts; which had they been but guided by a good pilot in their infancy, and met with fair congenial weather on their outward way, might have flowed by a more peaceful source towards a very different haven at last. It is said, “Man is the creature of circumstances.” So is he to a great extent, and so it was with the youth before us. He was a genius, and, in his own words, “misunderstood.” He was born with a soul for poetry and painting—“the high arts.” His talents had been alike unappreciated, and his “words and actions

misapplied." The every-day life of those around him, for the most part, interested him but little, and their words seldom found an echo in his breast, for the warmth there had not been kindled, but had well-nigh died away.

Twice or thrice he had peered in at the casement, and now he observed an elderly woman enter the small, meanly furnished apartment, which he had hardly noticed, from a door at the back which appeared to lead into another room. She had in her hand the jug of beer he had given the child.

"Here, dear," she said, approaching the lady, and holding some of the beverage in a cup to her lips, "you have had to wait a long while;" but the poor lady, with another yell, thrust the hand from her, and would, with the gesture, have dashed the cup to the ground, had not the woman held it with a firm grasp, as though aware of her intention.

"Come, come, you are over-tired; let me get you to bed—come to your 'Madge.'"

"I heard a voice," said the poor creature, with the excited look returning.

"No, no; you didn't! it was only the moaning of the sea—you often take that for voices you know."

"I tell you I heard a voice, woman! Do you think I'm so mad, I cannot tell a voice? It was not 'his,' nor 'her's' though!—No! she is a woman now, and loathes me!" And laying her head upon the arm kindly extended around her, she burst into a flood of tears.

When the young man gazed again, the apartment was empty. He waited for some few minutes, and then gave a modest tap at the door. It was opened almost immediately by the old woman. Apologizing politely for his intrusion, he begged of her a "light for his cigar." The woman turned to comply with his request, and then eyeing him keenly, asked, "Were you outside just now, sir?"

The sudden question brought a faint colouring to the youth's pale face; but after a moment's thought, during which he lit his

cigar, he replied, "Yes, I was, and was about to knock, when somebody screamed so strangely that I could not refrain from looking in at the window instead—that lady seems very ill, but how beautiful she is!"

"Oh, poor soul! she is silly," returned the woman, sighing.

"Do you think she would mind me taking her portrait," he asked, coming to the real reasons for which he had tapped at the door.

"Taking her *what*, sir?" asked the woman, who had begun busying herself about the room, preparing to shut up for the night.

"Drawing her head, and painting it," explained he.

"Oh! making a picture of her—oh, no; it might amuse her looking at some one fresh."

"But do you think she would keep quiet?"

"Oh, I'd make her quiet," replied the woman.

"Not by violence, I hope," he demanded, knitting his brows.

"Lawk o' mercy, no, sir! the only violence I've ever done her, or ever will, is by doing all I can in my poor way to comfort her."

"Thank you, my good woman; I shall be extremely obliged if you can get her to 'sit,' just for half an hour, two or three times, that I may place the 'head' correctly on the canvas. I shall be going to London shortly, and can finish it there without her, provided I get the expression of her countenance beforehand."

"I'll undertake to keep her quiet, sir; if I only give her that old cushion with something pinned round it, she'll sit and rock that, and sing to it for hours."

There are many whose feelings of interest and sympathy would have urged them to linger a while, to have learnt perhaps more concerning the unfortunate being, whose senses had deserted her—of that fair tenement from which "hope and joy had fled;" but the hearer had gained his object, and agreeing to be there in the afternoon of the following day, he took his leave of the woman, who, as

she gazed after him for a moment, before closing the door, muttered, "An artist, I suppose—not so mean and shabby-like, as I thought they always were—he looks a gentleman, and clever too, for such a stripling."

The subject of her observations had descended the path from the cottage, and stood once more upon the beach. The tide had gone down, and the shadows of the cliffs were thrown upon the sands in broad, marked outline. As he noticed this he fancied he beheld a moving shadow as of some one walking on the very edge; and, looking up, he saw distinctly the figure of a man moving onward with himself. It disappeared almost as soon as perceived.

"Some one enraptured with the scene, as I have been, I suppose," observed he. "That woman has made me feel superstitious, I think, for I could have believed it was *him*—but how ridiculous when he is not here. But, what a strong resemblance! Oh! if there is one under that sky I hate, I hate him, and he more than hates me! I can read it in his eye—vain, perfidious wretch!"

He had still a good four miles to walk, and all the way on his homeward path did he first meditate upon the master-touch he should give to the work of art he was so impatient to commence, to exhibit the poor power of his hand! and then upon that shadow on the sands, while his lip curled with disdainful resentment as he thought of its substance.

Some may consider his an unnatural and overdrawn character; but could they but penetrate through the veil of outward seeming, they would not find it so very rare. He had never sought the Spirit of Truth to enlighten him, nor yet the guidance of the outstretched Hand from above; and the goodly seeds sown in his heart were choked up by rank and poisonous weeds. Far better for him had his reflections been, "I will pray for mine enemies, I will do good to them which persecute me, and I will remember my Creator in the days of my youth."

CHAPTER II.

“Yes ; in early youth remember
The God, who hath guarded thee—
For a spell on ‘bleak December’
Shall the faith of the ‘young May’ be.”

SEATED in a comfortable arm-chair, with a newspaper before him, in the spacious and well-furnished drawing-room of his own very commodious house at Sea View sat Mr. (or, as he was more commonly called) Dr. Thornton. It was about eight o'clock in the evening ; a fire had just been lit, which soon began to crackle and blaze away cheerfully ; candles had been brought in, and with them the tea. The Doctor was the only present occupant of the apartment, but, judging by the number of the cups, two more were evidently expected. He was a tall, well-proportioned man, and might have

numbered sixty summers, but the deep lines on the full fine forehead, and the silver threads scattered so freely among locks once of a jetty blackness (and of no small importance in the estimation of the owner), told that those summer suns had not passed unheeded over his head, without the accompanying "hand," ever-working and remorseless, whose traces were so plainly written there. Still he was not old-looking for his age. When in a jocular mood he might have passed for some years younger. But these moods were not frequent, and had of late years been very rare, for one of the ills of declining life had already attacked him in the shape of the gout. It was the only acute pain he had ever felt, at least in his remembrance, and had rendered his naturally irritable temperament almost unbearable at times. He possessed by nature goodness of heart, but he had ever looked upon any softening emotion as great weakness, and had hidden it accordingly. He termed love and any display of affection "humbug;" poetry, music, and light literature he con-

tended ought to be done away with, as "superfluities and insufferable nonsense." In fact, he was of that order of beings who look upon life as it is, in its stern reality, without any of those graces and adornments which enlighten the dullest lot, and lead the sad one of earth cheerily, with faith, on hopeful wing. Imagination he held as a "disorder of the brain," nor could he comprehend its creative power, its high calling. These were enigmas to him. But there were some few, who knew him best, who suspected that under a rough exterior there lurked far softer, warmer feelings. At this time of his life he was generous in a measure, yet few prized money more than he. The finest scenery in the world possessed no such charm for his eyes as did the column of that newspaper upon which they then rested—the "Money Market." Indeed, in his earlier years, money had been, to use a hackneyed expression, his god.

Until the age of forty-five, he had carried on his profession in London ; and few practices, perhaps, could boast of a more success-

ful career than that of "Steel and Thornton, Surgeons ;" but the latter, not content with his gains from industry and skill, became involved, through "speculations," to a considerable extent, and his losses thereby would have well-nigh ruined him, had he not, at this juncture, been called away to the south of France to attend the last days of an uncle, his only remaining relative, with the exception of a nephew who had been consigned to his care the year before by an only brother on his deathbed. This child, then very young, had been placed by him at a preparatory school a few miles from town. His uncle's life had been long despaired of, and for the faint hope of prolonging it had he gone abroad. Thornton, at his desire, remained with him till his death, which took place a few months after the arrival of the former, who joyfully discovered by the will that all the property had been bequeathed to him, thereby making him suddenly an independent and a wealthy man. Accordingly, he gave up his London practice, and purchased the pretty sea residence

wherein we now find him. He still visited a few of his old friends professionally, and would go, if called, to any case of sudden emergency or danger. He also frequently gave his advice gratis, which rendered him popular among the lower classes of Doverton. So, altogether, the Doctor was a very important person. There were many who found amusement in his peculiarities, one of the greatest of which was his fondness for hearing himself talk, especially in discussing his own affairs, in which he forgot that others might not be so interested as himself.

We have been rather concise in the description of the Doctor's character—he "was a character," a strong mixture of good and evil. The child, who still remained in his care, had experienced every liberality at his hand—having received a sound education, the expenses of which had been defrayed by the Doctor's own purse; for, to do Thornton justice, he had never touched a farthing of the interest of the youth's money, of which a supply had been left sufficient to keep him independent of friends. The boy had passed

his vacations from school at his uncle's, and dull monotonous holidays they would have been but for the kindness of the good house-keeper, who took great compassion on the solitary child. She had served the Doctor for many years, indeed, ever since he left the hospital; and he, like most bachelors, being much engaged from home, left everything under her care and guidance, fully satisfied in his own mind that he had done all in his power for the child of his lost brother; and in some ways he had, indeed, done far more than was ever required of him—but in this, as in most things, his judgment erred. He did not consider those minor points, tending to “such great results”—the early forming of the mind; “the training of the twig into the goodly tree;” that genial society of so much importance in every age, even in infancy; the sympathy of “heart with heart,” and social intercourse with one another, expanding the human breast into the highest and noblest feelings of our nature. No; Thornton thought not of these things. The child was well in health, and well cared

for in all the comforts of life ; and, though moody and absorbed in manner, and unlike most boys, seeking books and quiet pursuits, it never occurred to him that his nephew would be otherwise than happy. And so the child's early life passed, and he moped apart, shunning all of his own age, and making no companion even during his school-days. The Doctor considering him on "study bent," and anticipating a brilliant successor in the profession of which he had made up his mind his nephew should become a member, sent him to Germany to study the medical science. On the youth's return from thence, some four years after, great was his astonishment to find his uncle married. The event had certainly been the surprise of everybody, not but what the Doctor had always been an advocate for wedlock among his friends and patients—and, perhaps, many had been still more surprised that he had not entered the connubial state before—but, when a man waits to the age of fifty-five, or more, and then becomes a Benedict, it is always the cause of more or less wonder. His wife was

the second daughter of the deceased Colonel Blue, of Doverton, a man who had been greatly respected by all its inhabitants. His widow and three daughters were left comfortably off, and the former still resided in the roomy but formal-looking house near the village, with her eldest daughter, still a spinster. Mrs. Thornton was a few years younger than the Doctor, and possessed that sweet temper and calm demeanour which can comply without submission, and control without letting the reins be either seen or felt, and was in every way appropriate to his peculiar and eccentric disposition. She was quiet when he talked, and never answered when he swore at her, which was not unusual; but, though tyrannical in manner, he was not a bad husband, and was often known to smile at his own extreme petulance. It would appear inconsistency—which it certainly was—but this petulant spirit seemed rarely to disclose his real nature, and, whether from not being judiciously managed in childhood, or from other causes, it certainly vented itself at times in most ridiculous paroxysms. There were some few

who thought they could trace the real cause of Thornton changing his state so late in life.

Fifteen years before the time our story commences, and not long before his arrival at Doverton, a carriage had arrived one evening from the town of M——, and stopped at the before-mentioned house of the late Colonel Blue. From the vehicle alighted the Doctor himself, followed by a respectable-looking woman, with a very young baby in her arms.

It was rather a novel spectacle, to see a single gentleman with such accompaniments, but, as it was dark, and they were soon ushered into the house, nobody was any the wiser from the circumstance but the good people belonging to it, who appeared to have been in expectation of the new-comers.

Colonel Blue and Thornton had been great friends, and on a letter arriving, a year or two after the death of the former, petitioning a favour of Mrs. Blue, on the score of such friendship from the latter, it caused neither consternation

nor alarm, although the subject might have done so in a house containing two maiden ladies; for it was no less formidable than to ask Mrs. Blue to take charge of the infant child of a niece of the Doctor's, who had died suddenly after its birth. Thornton went on to say, that he had no relation in the world of whom to ask the favour, and, being a bachelor, he, of course, felt his inability to watch over and tend an infant child; added to which, the baby bade fair to be exceedingly delicate, and he imagined the sea air would do more for it than anything he could do. Accordingly the agreement was made, and there the child remained, dearly beloved by her kind protectoress, and also well watched over and attended by the Doctor himself.

Until the time when the latter thought fit to take Miss Rachel Blue to wife, she, whose care for the fair child had been most unremitting,—whose watchfulness in the hours of pain and weakness, which had been many, even in so brief a span, had never failed, and whose vigilance was repaid by

a love tenfold and a gratitude unspeakable, by the sweet object of her solicitude, and shared, in no small degree, by the heart of Thornton himself; but its depths were hidden, for such feelings with him were "weakness."

As soon as the bridal pair had returned from the Continent, where they had spent their honeymoon, the gentle child took up her abode also at Sea View with her cherished friends, where she was still domiciled at the present time. In short, returning to the drawing-room, described at the commencement of the chapter, the orphan girl, whose history has here been painted, entered the room, and with a step so fairy-like that the Doctor had not heard it; nor did he perceive her glide across the apartment and sink, as if weary, into a seat close by him.

His attention was too deeply engrossed in the "City Intelligence" at that moment, for so soft and gentle a movement to arrest it. There was a couch on either side of the fireplace, but the one on which she reclined was

partly behind her uncle (as she always called him), for he had drawn his chair close to the table in front of the blaze, and was quite ignorant of the presence of another person.

Presently he turned hastily towards the table, and then rose, evidently annoyed, and rang the bell with no care for the wire. He reseated himself as quickly as he had risen, still unconscious of the quiet gaze bent upon him.

A respectable old man appeared at the door before the sound of the bell had ceased.

"Is anybody coming to make this tea to-night, or not?"

"I think missus will be up in a few minutes, sir," replied the man, respectfully.

"In a few minutes! What's she doing; does she know *I'm in*? What do you mean?"

"I've told missus, sir, that you are come in, but Miss Blue is with her in the dining-room. I think she's going directly, sir."

"*Directly*! What the devil makes you think that? She don't often go *directly*."

"She said she could only stay a few

moments when I let her in; but I'll tell missus again, sir;" and the man withdrew.

The girl still continued her quiet thoughtful gaze; and, although Thornton's back was towards her, she did not take her eyes off him, but bent forward that she might see his side face, upon which she fixed her large pensive eyes with something of a troubled look.

Her hair was long and flowing, and fell in golden waves rather than curls about her snowy neck, for her complexion was transparently white, even to fragility, and would have spoken that word plainly to the beholder's heart alone, but when coupled with the almost heavenly expression of those large violet eyes, upon which few could gaze without melting into tenderness, for a divine light shone in them—a light which seemed to say, "I seek for higher things, purer than day," that word became, in its fullest meaning, a "fixed certainty." There could be no doubt in the unearthly sweetness of the small oval face, which at times, when left to its calm placidity, free from the

dark, petty annoyances, the paltry grievances, of this lower world, partook of a celestial beam, a glow from the bright Heaven, whither her pathway led. She was not tall, hardly perhaps of the middle height, but her every gesture was replete with that elegance, that nameless attraction, to be felt but not expressed. As her body, so her mind. Such was Eve Ending.

A few minutes had elapsed, and, turning over in her mind what she should do best to please the contrary spirit before her, she sat undetermined.

"Uncle," she said at length, and silvery and low was the melody, but he started, and even turned pale, at the sound of the voice.

"Child ! how you frightened me."

"I beg your pardon, uncle dear—but shall I make the tea?"

"No, child ! You'd better keep your legs up and be quiet. How's your pulse?" Turning to her and taking the little slender wrist in his hand—"Feeble, eh ? There, put your legs up, and go to sleep if you can ;" and he turned to his newspaper.

•

Sleep! Eve's eyes were very far from sleep; there was trouble in them, not for herself, but for others. Her feebleness was sometimes very great, for, with all the care bestowed upon her, the slender frame grew more slender day by day, and the breath became so troublesome, that her nights were often sleepless. So she closed her eyes, as she was desired, to seek the soothing balm; a few minutes of forgetfulness would refresh exhausted nature, and often bring a faint colour to her pallid cheek; but the trial was useless now, the phantom flew from her the swifter the more she tried to pursue it, and the eyes at last wandered in their old direction, and fastened themselves on the Doctor, whilst he, appearing to forget the advice he had given for sleep, said abruptly, "I wonder what Miss Blue wants with your aunt, now? Why can't she come up, I should like to know, instead of keeping everybody waiting her will and pleasure?"

"I think," replied Eve, "she had a message for Aunt Rachel, from dear Rose

.

Lindsay, as I heard her say she had received a letter from her this afternoon."

"Oh! from that madcap, eh?"

Eve was silent; Rose Lindsay had been her earliest companion; two years older than herself, they had been playmates in childhood, and were now fond friends in youth. Rose was her dear Aunt Rachel's niece, the only child of Mrs. Blue's youngest daughter, who had been left a widow early in life, comfortably off in worldly affairs, but her heart had never recovered the loss of her husband. The marriage of Captain and Mrs. Lindsay had been one of love, and not, as usual, of interest. She lived a secluded life in a pretty villa at St. John's Wood; was wrapt up in her child, and never so thoroughly at ease as when Rose was seated by her side. But she was not selfish; and, consequently, advocated her daughter's frequent visits from home, which Rose, sometimes against her inclination, was compelled to make—for Rose was the acknowledged heiress of Teevesdale Park, the seat of General Lindsay, her father's elder brother.

He was an old and childless widower ; loving this child almost as if she were his own, and disappointed if she were not often his guest. Rose was always freely supplied with money, for he persisted in making her a liberal allowance ; but there had been formerly great disputes between her uncle and mother as to Rose's style of living. He wished Mrs. Lindsay, on the death of her husband, to reside at Teevesdale Park with him, as he did not like its future mistress brought up in her present unpretending manner ; but on this point Mrs. Lindsay was firm, and remained in her own quiet little home with her child ; nor would she yield to his frequently expressed desire that Rose should keep her own lady's-maid and live in a way becoming her future "prospects." Mrs. Lindsay was decided in her resolution of bringing up her child in usefulness ; with humility of heart, that should aught in this changing world turn the wheel of fortune against her, her future might lose a large share of its bitterness ; and so Rose lived on in quiet happiness with her mother. Nor

did she always like leaving her for her long sojourns at Teevesdale Park, as some of her happiest days had been spent at Doverton with her grandmamma and Aunt Rachel's dear "little Eve," who, though only two years her junior, was often thus addressed by Rose on account of her being so delicate.

"Is she coming down here?" asked the Doctor, after a long pause, during which Eve's eyes had been fixed in deep thought.

"Yes. Miss Maria Blue said next week."

"Well, I wish she'd take herself off—Miss Blue, I mean—she's like all you women, can't stop her tongue when she set's it going."

"She is gone, my dear," spoke Mrs. Thornton from the doorway, followed by the man-servant with the urn.

"Well, just tell her another time that if she calls when we're going to our meals, that I'll thank her either to join us or postpone her news for a more convenient season," cried the husband, waxing warm. "I never saw anything like the irregularity here! You profess to make tea at seven

o'clock, and it's never put upon the table till half an hour after, and you make your appearance half an hour after that. And where's that boy—is he going to stay out to-night till past ten? If so, you may tell him to stay out altogether; I will not have the rules of the house broken in this way. John,"—to the man who was bringing in the toast—"if Mr. Ralph Thornton doesn't find his way home before ten again, you may tell him I desired you to shut the door in his face; do you hear?" as the man had not replied.

"Yes, sir. Mr. Ralph is very seldom so late, sir. He came in just before you this evening, sir, and he's reading in his study; he told me to let him know when tea was ready. I have told him, sir. He's coming up the stairs now."

"Is Mr. Greenhill better, uncle?" asked Eve, wishing to turn the attention from the young man, who had taken his seat at the table, and placed an open book before him.

"Oh! have you been to see the Rector, my love?" Mrs. Thornton asked, almost in

the same breath, as she saw and seconded Eve's desire.

"Yes; he's better, poor fellow, but he can't leave his room yet. Ernest Morley was with him—what a fine young fellow he's grown, to be sure!"

"Oh! has he come? He really is very fond of his old tutor; and I am sure nobody can wonder at it."

"Yes; he arrived by the five o'clock train at M——; and when I got to Greenhill's, I found the carriage had gone for him. So he was expected, I suppose? I thought there was some one with him, for there were two voices in the hall, but he came upstairs alone."

"I daresay it was his valet," said Mrs. Thornton.

Eve was looking at Ralph. He did not speak; indeed, he did not appear to have heard what was said; he sipped his tea, and every now and then read a few lines of the book before him.

"Did you know he was coming?" asked Mrs. Thornton, turning to him.

“Who — Morley? Yes,” replied the youth (he was the same whose footsteps we followed the evening before).

“I wonder if he will come to see us. Did he say he should stay long?”

“I don’t know,” he answered, absently, without looking up from his book.

“He would come if Rosey was here,” said Eve, smiling and colouring, “I know.”

“I’m sure he comes here quite as much to see you as he does her,” remarked the Doctor, with evident pique. “Why, he told me to-night that he had brought a splendid basket of grapes for you from Morley Court, but that somehow or other they had been left at the station; he was thinking so of poor Greenhill, he forgot to see them put into the carriage; but he knows they will be taken care of, he says; his name is written in full upon the basket, and he is going to ride over to M—— to-morrow to get them for you. He is a fine, noble young man, and I am sure always most attentive to you; but some people are stubborn, and don’t, or won’t, appreciate these things.”

Eve did not answer; she could not at that moment; there were contending emotions at her heart; but she did not look as if the attention was unappreciated, for her eyes glistened very much, and a bright blush suffused her cheek, as she murmured a little while after, "It is very kind of him."

Ralph had glanced angrily at the Doctor at the conclusion of his speech, but it was unperceived by the latter, who was turning his paper; and now, with an expression of even more haughtiness and reserve than usual, the youth bent his head upon his hand, and began to read again.

"Did you get my knitting-cotton last night, Ralph?"

"No, aunt; they had none of that size, but they told Wakeful to be sure and bring some from M—— to-morrow evening."

"How tiresome! I can't go on with my counterpane. Rose sent the book, Eve tells me; is that it you're reading?"

"Yes, Wakeful was late; I waited at the library above an hour."

"That made you keep out till half-past ten, I suppose," observed the Doctor, sarcastically.

"Hardly," said Mrs. Thornton. "Why it don't take me three quarters of an hour to walk back from there."

Mrs. Thornton was one of those good people who mean well, but have no tact. She often said things at the wrong time and in the wrong place. In her endeavour to turn the conversation from the direction it had taken, she had hit upon an unfortunate theme.

The cheek of the young man slightly tinged as he said, "I called on the Cliftons afterwards."

"Indeed!—how was Clifton?" asked the Doctor.

"I don't know—he was out," was the laconic reply.

"Perhaps you heard how the rest of the family were?" questioned his uncle, with a sneer.

"Pretty well, I believe." The youth had not raised his eyes from the page he was perusing during this short dialogue. After

a few minutes had elapsed, however, the impulse to raise them to those which he felt were earnestly regarding him was irresistible, and he obeyed the impulse, but almost as instantly lowered them again. He met Eve's steadfast gaze of sorrow, pity, and mild reproof. It was such a glance as a redeemed spirit, a bright angel, might cast upon fallen man—the compassion of those pure ones above upon frail mortality.

The warm blood, which had tinged the young man's cheek before, now mounted to the very roots of his hair. There was a long silence, and then Mrs. Thornton unwittingly reverted to the book again. "Eve has been reading some of it to-day; she says she is already much interested in it."

No answer.

"What's the boy got there, that he can't answer when he's spoken to? Another d—d novel, or some such humbug, eh?"

"Oh, uncle dear, it is not humbug indeed—you would like it if you would only read it," said Eve, beseechingly.

"I read it! I'd much rather burn it—

confounded nonsense!—as if some fools hadn't nonsense enough in their heads already!"

"I think the very title would tell that it could not be all nonsense, uncle," returned Eve, in the same tone.

"Pray what is that?"

"'Good in Everything,'" said Ralph, without looking up.

"Then I know that it is all nonsense, and more than nonsense, d—d trash! 'Good in everything' indeed, there's very little good to be found in anything or anybody—a precious deal more evil! And as to the ingratitude! we needn't speak of that: here's a fellow who (though I wish to take no credit to myself) has been brought up in every comfort and even luxury, with no end of money spent on his education, befitting him to enter a high profession, and take a proper standing in society, and make his way in life—throws all over, and in pure wilfulness follows his own ridiculous pursuits, sketching 'moonlight scenes,' and reading 'fool's dreams,' instead of studying the

intellectual and first medical works of the day, so liberally provided for him, and now lying about covered with dust in his room." But before this outburst was finished, Ralph had risen from his seat, and, taking his book with him, abruptly left the room—a pause—"Good in everything indeed," from the Doctor—another pause of some minutes—"Uncle," whispered the plaintive voice from the sofa.

"Well, child?"

Strange he was always softened at that sound. And yet it was not strange, for it was like the sun breaking through a dense cloud.

"Well?" Eve repeated, "I don't think that title untrue; I think there is good, or at all events that good may proceed from everything."

"I suppose there's 'good' then in your having to be pinned to that sofa nearly all the young days of your life. 'Good' in all the pain in your side and chest, eh?" His voice faltered in spite of its contemptuous tone.

"Yes, unquestionably," responded Eve.

"How do you make that out, girl?"

"I think that it has made me think more of God," she answered, humbly. Thornton did not reply for some moments. There was an unusual moisture in his dark eye.

"There's time enough for all that, my girl," he said, at length.

"No, dear uncle; we have none of us too much time, indeed; it so soon passes."

Silence reigned again. The fair girl, exhausted more by feeling than speech, sunk back upon the pillowed couch. "Time is short, and eternity is long," were the words that echoed in her busy brain. But by degrees its workings were lulled, the drooping eyelids closed, and slumber crept stealthily over the weary frame.

CHAPTER III.

"How is it, in a world where all things sin and die,
Such purity is found?
Surely for immortality—
For endless bliss—for ecstasy—
For realms of light—refulgency—
Thy soul is outward-bound!"

"Stranger, we all may journey there,
Tho' winding path, to some,
Intricate wanderings yield despair;
But Mercy leads us home!"

A GLEAM of sunshine streamed through the window of Ralph's study, and rested upon Eve, who sat on a low ottoman intent upon the book on her lap. An old arm-chair stood at her back, against which she reclined, and on it was placed her little work-box and embroidery. She was sitting to oblige Ralph, who for the hundredth time or more

was making "a study" of her head. This time it was a half-length figure he was taking.

Eve had been reading aloud to Ralph, until her gentle voice became so low from weakness that she was fain to stop.

"Have you nearly done with me? May I raise my eyes now?" she asked, at length.

"Only one minute—just for the golden tinge on the eyelash. There—that's beautiful! Thank you."

Eve rose from her low posture, fatigued with her long sitting.

"You're not going up stairs, are you?" asked Ralph.

"Not if you would like me to stay here," she answered.

"Oh, I forgot, though; there's no sofa here, and you look so tired," he said.

"Never mind that; this will do just as well." And she lay back in the old chair, supporting her feet upon the ottoman.

Ralph, still standing at his easel, proceeded to touch up his morning's work.

"This will be more like than any I have

done yet. The expression is your own, although I say it. I dare say they'll want to hang this in the drawing-room, instead of the half-length one there now. I don't think the painting's better, though; for I got that flesh quite after Etty. Which do you like best?" he added, as Eve was silent. Still receiving no reply, he paused to look at her.

She was embroidering a collar, but her slender fingers moved mechanically over the work, tracing the small leaves of the pattern before her. She raised her deep, thoughtful eyes to his.

"I beg your pardon—did you speak to me?"

"Yes. How full of thought you are! You're always thinking. What were you thinking about?"

"I was thinking about you, Ralph," she answered, resuming her work.

"About me? Nothing *good* of me, of course; you never do. What was it?"

"Indeed, dear Ralph, you are mistaken;

for I was only then thinking how good you might be."

"Might be! 'Might be' and 'are' are two very different things."

"Not so very different in your case. At all events, the 'might be' rests with yourself."

"Does it, indeed? I don't see that my being at all rests with myself. I was never consulted upon the matter, but thrust into the world as others are; and accordingly I act, not by my own will, but by what you would call a 'good will,' I suppose, though it doesn't always seem so. I don't consider that I have anything to do with it. But we've talked this all over before, and I know you don't agree with me. Perhaps you are right," he continued, seeing her grieved countenance. "But I could never be an angel as you are, or think like one, or act like one, either. But tell me, what made you think about me just then?"

"I will, if you will not be angry."

"Angry? Am I ever angry at what you say? You know I never am, though

I would not take it from another living creature."

"I was thinking, then, what made you say last night that you called at the Cliftons the evening before—that *that* detained you?"

"I did call—I mean I ——" stammered the youth, colouring.

"No, Ralph; you did not call, or you would have told me yesterday morning, when you were describing your lonely walk along the shore, and telling me how you lingered to try and bear in mind the enchanting sight of the sea by moonlight, for that picture you are going to do for Sir Edward Morley. You said you feared you should be very late, but that you could not help stopping every few minutes to admire it; indeed, your description made me quite long to have been with you. I could not sleep for thinking of it; and when I did sleep at last, it was to dream of that glittering sea and those brilliant stars, like sparkling jewels in the sweet, calm sky. Why, oh! why, did you not tell the truth?"

"Whatever was the use of speaking of

such a scene to people who could not understand it ?—who would make a laughing-stock of me as a star-gazing idiot ?—whose minds are so brimful of dull earthly dross that they would find much more to admire in a paltry fee from some bedridden patient ? Whatever would have been the use of telling the truth to such people as these ?”

“Truth, dear Ralph, is a holy thing, and as such should be revered, not broken or slighted for a matter of feeling.”

“I’m sure I’ve heard you yourself, Eve, say to Rose Lindsay, that truth is cold, when she’s been going it rather too strong to some old wretch or other—Miss Blue, for instance. I beg your pardon, I forgot they had made her a sort of relation to you.”

“She is equally a sort of relation to you, Ralph,” said Eve, smiling in spite of her solemnity ; “but though Miss Blue is very peculiar, she has feelings common to us all ; indeed, perhaps her sensitiveness is stronger, as it often is with those who have peculiarities, especially when those peculiarities are too roughly touched upon ; and dear Rose

Lindsay, in the natural candour of her disposition and openness of her heart, is very prone to speak too plainly, and say things which, as you know, she very often would wish to recall; her feeling is as great as her candour, and she would not wilfully hurt another, at least," (as Ralph was about to speak) "haste of temper is also natural to her, but if she feels resentment for one moment, she is sorry for it in the next."

"Oh, yes! all she does and says is natural to her; but I am all *unnatural*, I suppose."

"Ralph, you told me you would not be offended at what I said," observed Eve, sadly.

"Neither am I offended, only you seem to consider me so very unworthy."

"I was not thinking of you at that moment; I was remembering that instance in which Rose agreed with me that 'truth in itself was cold,'—she had, in a moment of anger, told a bitter truth; there was no need for it to be spoken, and gladly would she have unsaid the words, the memory of which, she

knew too well, would cause her own breast, and another's, many a pang.

“In such an instance, dear Ralph, it is that ‘truth is cold.’ God’s own spirit is truth, and He hath shown to us the light of His truth to be a lantern unto our feet, and a light unto our paths. But, Ralph, His truth is hallowed by mercy. If He looked alone to the stern truths of our fallen nature and degraded lives, our changeful hearts and wandering desires,—if He looked on these things without mercy, where should we be? What would be our doom? Surely we should faint upon the ‘winding way,’ and cry in despair, ‘All Thy waves are gone over me.’ But the light of His truth hath shown us good from evil, and, if we only nourish it in our hearts, it will fix them on the faith which looks beyond the rough journey, and all the horrors of the deep, to ‘that land where no change can reach—where only true joys are to be found—where waves of trouble and perplexity are never known,—but where peace abides, such as the calm of this world cannot give, or its storms take away.’ Ralph,

dear Ralph ! nourish the light of truth, all these things and much more will it reveal to you ; and, when waves of trouble compass you, and there may, perhaps, seem no escape, —when enemies persecute, or friends forsake you, you will feel the full value of that Friend this light has shown you—the Friend who never forsakes or fails—who points a way of escape no earthly eye could see or worldly wisdom descry. Seek this light, dear Ralph, and you will find it.” She ceased, and closed her eyes, for her breathing came quickly and painfully.

Ralph had laid down his brush, and was pacing the room with a slow and thoughtful air ; indeed, no word had fallen on his ear unheard or unheeded.

“Eve, you are talking too much. I’m afraid you are very tired.”

“No, oh, no ! if I only thought you would listen to me, and remember.”

“I am listening—and I will remember,” he said, as he looked with mingled admiration and wonder at the flushed cheek and kindling eye of the fair young speaker—s

fragile in her excessive beauty ; she looked, indeed, the transient flower of a day, born but to be cut down. "I am only afraid of tiring you, Eve. Your talking does me more good than anything else in the world."

"But you will not follow my advice, Ralph ; you never do as I ask you. I thought you promised me, some time ago, that you would try to think differently of the ways of God—to remember that you had power given you to act for 'right or wrong.'"

"I have tried ; but the power seems very poor. One is compelled to do and act by circumstances."

"The power is in us all ; but, like everything else, if it is not exerted and brought into practice, its strength fades, and by-and-by it will become dormant. It requires more exertion in some natures than others, I believe, to gain full command of this power ; but the same God who gives it will, if we pray for it, grant us grace to use it and enable us to attain its full force. He knows how we require it in this pathway of trial, in which we are placed for some wise

purpose, which we are not permitted *now* to know."

"But you forget that I have not that light, Eve, as you have, to reveal this Friend to me. He would not answer my prayer if He really is as you would have me believe. But I cannot help doubting. Why? For what purpose can He, if really our friend, torment us here?—surround us with difficulties, and place us with people quite opposite to our natures, who neither understand our motives nor our feelings—giving some power, as you call it, to tyrannize over us and each other? Why are some to live long lives of pleasure, with no pain, no trouble, while others are fretted to the very dust? And why are some born better than their fellow-creatures, given more of the 'power' you speak of—more 'light,' if you will, and then, after a few short years of pain—" He stopped abruptly, but his step was quicker, and he looked agitated, as he walked up and down the room.

"You would ask," replied Eve, "what is the good of their lives? We are not to know

now, and, therefore, it is wrong to enquire. Some do appear, as you say, to pass through life with few clouds to dim their sky; but how do we know what passes, or what may have passed, within them? Perhaps, if we knew all, we should not wish to change places with them? All have their cup of sorrow at some time of their lives, and all their joy. You say, Ralph, you do not know our Friend—that He has not been revealed unto you. I was going to beg of you not to return to so distressing a theme, but if you still feel this terrible unbelief, you are right, dear Ralph, to speak about it; it is far better than shutting it up in your own breast to canker and take root.”

“There is no other mortal to whom I could speak as I do to you, Eve. Surely if there is truth in Mr. Greenhill’s sermon of last Sunday—which, at your petition, I went to hear—you are one of those few who shall live for ever in the light of His countenance, Greenhill called Him ‘the inexhaustible Fountain of Light and Joy—the Author and Giver of Life everlasting.’ It is surprising

to me how a person can rave of One whom he has never seen in such a measure."

"Oh, dear Ralph, do not say 'never seen,' " said Eve, while a large tear trickled down her now pale cheek ; " we have all seen Him, and see Him every day, Ralph. Do you mean to tell me that, with your great mind for the good and beautiful, your spirit for all that is noble, you cannot trace the hand of that Great One in all His works ? Do you mean to say that, in your lovely walk on Tuesday evening, you did not think of Him ? that you looked at and admired all that His hand had made ? that you revelled in the sense of delight, the talent of inspiration which He has given you ? also the works of His hand, and yet owned not their Maker ? that the pale moon in her sweet, silent eloquence—the bright stars, which speak of beauty unequalled here—the silvery rolling wave, which is but a beauteous simile of the transient troubles of life, did not move you to adoration of the Great Maker of them all ? Ralph ! Ralph ! if you tell me so I will not believe you. You did see Him, though you

owned Him not. Own Him!—love Him, Ralph; He will love you and help you!” She gasped for breath; great had been her excitement during this speech—but it was in a goodly cause. Ralph had sat down with his hands over his eyes, and remained perfectly still till Eve paused thus. He rose instantly, and, leaving the room with haste, soon returned with a glass of water, which he held to her lips.

“Thank you,” she said, as soon as she had recovered a little; “I am better now. Ralph, you were speaking of those whose few years of life were full of pain, and then,—” she paused in her turn—“how soon they died; but think not their mission has always been in vain; my life has been short, and I have had much pain to bear, but I have had my share of comfort and of joy. Ralph! you have it in your power, which you so despise, to make the little remainder happier still. Do not, Ralph!—pray!” as the young man put his handkerchief to his eyes. “It must be; what you would have said is true—my time is very short—I feel it. Yes, dear

Ralph, it is quite true; but if, in my last hours I can feel that I have been the poor means of bringing your wandering steps nearer to your God and mine, I shall feel bliss indeed; my short life will not have been spent in vain; and when you come, Ralph, to your far-off home at last, we shall then meet in endless felicity, and you will be welcomed the dearer as a sheep that once was lost, which went astray and is found."

"Eve! Eve! your home cannot be mine; I shall never enter there!"

He was more moved than she had ever seen him. "Dear Ralph, Mercy will lead you—will guide you to —" a violent fit of coughing arrested her, so violent that she struggled for breath. Before Ralph could hasten to her side and support her with his arm, the handkerchief she held to her mouth was deluged in blood. Horror-stricken (for he had never seen her pass so much before, only a few drops, and at long intervals, during the last two years), he rung the bell furiously, when two or three servants rushed in, alarmed at the startling peal, quickly followed by Mrs.

Thornton and Ernest Morley. The latter had just arrived ; he had been in earnest conversation with Mrs. Thornton, in the drawing-room, when the bell was rung so vigorously, but the sound had not caused them the consternation it had those below, not being heard so loudly. The scream of the housemaid, as she entered the study, had attracted their attention, and they had lost no time in descending, to find Eve lying, like one dead, still supported by Ralph's arm.

"Water ! water !" was echoed by all ; and old Joan Austin, the housekeeper, chafed the hands and temples of the poor girl, while Morley endeavoured to pour some wine into her mouth. Mrs. Thornton's exclamation, "Dear, dear me, Ralph, she has sat too long !" revived the stunned senses of the youth, whose cheek was well-nigh as blanched as that of the inanimate form he supported.

"She has been talking too much, I think," he whispered, while cold drops of perspiration stood upon his forehead, and the arm he held round her trembled like an aspen-leaf.

"I think we had better get her up stairs, and lay her on her bed," said old Joan.

"That can soon be done," answered Morley, and, though deeply moved with the distressing scene, he lifted the young girl in his powerful arms as though she had been an infant, and carried her up the stairs, accompanied by Mrs. Thornton and the female servants. He laid her on the bed. Every restorative was administered, but for some time she looked quite inanimate. Mrs. Thornton sent off to the Doctor who was visiting an old patient in Doverton, begging his immediate return home.

At last she moved and sighed, opened her eyes, and by degrees the faint colour dawned in her marble-looking cheek. But Morley did not leave the bed-side till she had quite recovered from her long fainting-fit. While he bends over her we will note him.

He was tall and well-proportioned ; his figure fine and commanding ; his hair and whiskers, meeting under his chin, also the well-turned moustache, were of a rich warm brown. He would have been considered fair

than otherwise. The features were good, but if not strictly handsome, like those of the artist, the face was far more attractive. It beamed with good nature, with sympathetic feeling and open generosity of heart, and won, not only the admiration of the beholder, but, what is far more rare, his confidence too. Indeed, it was astonishing to find confidence reposed in such youth ; young and old of both sexes brought their grief-worn tales to him—tales, perhaps, they would have excluded from other ears. Even strangers poured forth heartfelt words to him—not as is usual, words from the lips alone—and while to those who needed it pecuniary aid was always given, the receiver was sure of what is far dearer to the “sorrowing one”—sympathy in his distress. While Morley’s hand was ready to aid, his ear was ever ready to hear ; a life of great indulgence had not done its usual work with him.

Morley was the only son of wealthy and doating parents ; but they had performed that “great secret” omitted by so many—they had set him a good example, and he

had followed it. As his birthright was noble, so was he in thought and deed.

Eve had now revived sufficiently to thank him for his kindness. She looked round, as if her eyes sought some face she did not see.

"I have sent for uncle, darling; he will not be long," said Mrs. Thornton, in answer to the searching gaze, as she imagined.

Morley, seeing his services were no longer required, kissed gently the little white hand he held in his own, and leaving the room softly, descended to the study. In the old chair where Eve had reclined sat Ralph, his face buried in his hands. He did not raise his head on Morley's entrance, who, perceiving his abstraction, walked to the easel, and stood in silent contemplation of the saint-like figure on the canvas.

"Poor dear girl," at length were the words which fell from his lips.

The word *dear* aroused the attention of the other, who, forsaking his posture, came and stood beside him. There were traces of deep emotion on his countenance, and Morley could almost have thought he had

been weeping. His kind heart was touched, as it always was, at signs of grief in another, especially of such a nature as he believed Ralph Thornton's to be. And in the spirit of that very kindness he spoke the following words:—

“She looks too beautiful to live—it is right for all who love her to feel prepared for what I fear must happen before long; but it is sad for them—very sad,” and a tear of genuine sympathy for the youth at his side dimmed the young man's eye. “Poor dear girl,” he repeated.

“I do not know why you should pity her,” observed Ralph, in a tone so cold that Morley looked round in surprise; he remembered, however, the reserved nature of the other, and was sorry he had alluded to feelings which perhaps Ralph would rather had remained unobserved.

“No; I do not know that any one is to be pitied with such bright hopes as she has,” he said. “You are right; we must pity those she will leave here; still there is always something very sad in the death of one just

entering womanhood, who might, were she spared, be a blessing to many—the happy mistress of a peaceful home—with kindred joys—a wife and mother——”

“Stop!” cried Ralph, so suddenly that Morley started, thinking something was the matter. “I hold it desecration of any man to speak of Eve so! to regard her in this light! she is not as other mortals—dull clods of the earth! she is not to be classed with them. Surely by some mistake alone her spirit fell into this form of clay!”

“Well, it is a beautiful and fitting tement—no other but a pure spirit could inhabit so angelic a form,” replied Morley, humouring the wild idea, while astonished at the young man’s rhapsody. “You are right in your views of the case—as poor Eve is now—and I am glad, for yourself, you can take such——”

“How do you mean?” asked the youth, in his haughtiest tone.

“Why, surely, if there were no real danger, which I do not think there was some time back—for your uncle, the Doctor,

assured me his opinion was, that with great care she might outgrow the malady—youth is on her side—and putting that out of the question, ‘while there’s life there’s hope.’ Surely, if there were ground for this hope, and it gendered into being, you would not then hold the opinions you have just expressed ; you would not sacrifice all human feeling on such a score—the poor girl’s, probably as well as others, for I conclude that while in a human form her feelings are of the same nature as our own——”

“They are not,” replied Ralph, peremptorily. “Her nature is not our own ! and, again, I say I should hold such feelings towards her in myself or any other man as profanation !” His eye glared and his cheek grew white in the intensity of his feeling.

“Well, well,” said Morley, observing his excitement, “we will talk no more about it now. I do not hesitate to say I think you are wrong. Eve’s state is very precarious, but she may yet outlive many—you or I—many in full health now ! and if it pleases

God to spare her, I can only add that for her sake and your own, I trust these opinions may change." He held out his hand as he spoke, and there was something so frank in the action and the manner of the speaker, that Ralph, although his brow was knit and his eyes flashed fire, could not but accept the proffered hand.

"We do not understand each other," he said, drawing his breath quickly and receding from the other as soon as the hands were unclasped: there had been no pressure in his. "I look upon Eve as the creature of another sphere—the sphere to which her spirit belongs, and from whence, by a wrong decree, it burst. It is yearning to return, but cannot part from the body without dissolution. The flesh, mean and miserable in itself, has been exalted by the spirit, and has been partaker of the desire, the burning desire, to quit this morbid state, and re-enter the realms of a brighter world! visions of which the poor thing of clay is permitted at times to dream, but to return in still more bitter contempt and detestation to the vile

plodding of the earth-worm ! the heaping up of the dross they call gold !”

“ Ralph Thornton, by those very dreams of which you speak, can you not see, are you not told of that existence in store for you, and me, and all who do their best in this existence which you deem so vile ! Eve Ending’s spirit is pure and good, but the Almighty has not limited His gifts or His goodness to her alone ; believe me, Ralph, if you would only study the interior as you do the exterior, you would often find as bright a gem in a much rougher casket ; I own it is far more beautiful to find the two combined, for the pleasing appearance is equally with the mind the remnant of a better state. Still we cannot always expect to find the two ; perfection was never meant for earth, we are placed, as it were, in a long journey of trial, and are not all gifted alike either in person or in mind. Those who are the less gifted, to them shall be the greater reward for all they overcome ; for from those to whom many talents are given, much shall be

required. We can but do our best ; all the sects, all the arguments, all the divisions of our religion, can teach us no more than the plain truth, though they may put it into many different forms, and strive to give many explanations. They will all be summed up in that one verse of Scripture, ' Fear God ; keep His commandments—this is the whole duty of man ! ' ”

Ralph Thornton had turned towards the window, with an air of indifference, during Morley's speech, but he had listened to it nevertheless, and was pondering on the quotation.

The former had moved from the easel, and, as if to turn the subject, was examining and remarking upon the many paintings and drawings scattered about the room,—some just begun, some half finished. In taking up a landscape, the better to admire its colouring and effect, he displayed to view a most exquisite female head in water-colours, placed behind it, seemingly half finished like so many others there. “ What a lovely

face!" he exclaimed. Receiving no reply to his commentary, he asked, "Who is she, Ralph?"

The youth had turned his head at Morley's exclamation, but was looking out of the window again. A satirical smile played about his mouth as he answered, "Oh, only a poor woman—a silly woman on Doverton beach." He thought that no young nobleman would care to know more about a "silly woman." He was mistaken.

"Silly! never. Surely that face betrays no turn of mind; and yet there may be despondency." He added, musingly, "Is she young?"

"Not very, I suppose; about thirty, I should think."

"Is she irrevocably silly? Can nothing be done for her?"

Ralph looked round in his turn, astonished,—"I'm sure I don't know; I didn't think it my business to enquire. I went to take the study of the head," he said, testily.

"When shall you be going again? I beg your pardon, do not think me impertinent;

but, if you have no objection, I should like to walk with you. I should like to see the original."

"One sitting more will suffice for what I want, I think. Of course, it is only as a study I took it; I may bring it into use with most of the others at a future time perhaps. To-day is Thursday; I shall not be going before Monday. If you will accompany me I shall be happy; it is a pretty walk, either along the shore, or over the cliffs, if the tide is up."

He spoke with more cordiality than before. The fact of a young man like Ernest Morley taking an interest in a poor, silly, lost creature whom he had never even seen,—a young man accustomed to mix in the first society, consisting of beauty, of grace, of high-born elegance,—struck him as something exceedingly different to what he expected in mankind. A strange interest crept over him for the manly and noble-looking being before him; and although he still held his principles in utter defiance and contempt—all he had said, in abhorrence and derision—he shook

hands this time with some appearance of warmth, as he pressed his companionship; and the agreement being made and settled for the walk on the following Monday, they parted.

CHAPTER IV.

"Gaily with pinions rise,
Hope on the wing!
See from the fitful skies
Comes a faint shadowing.

Fearless! face the day,
Bid the shade depart;
Chase the cloud away,
Brave, bold heart!"

TREEVESDALE PARK, the seat of General Lindsay, was situated in one of Old England's most favoured spots for picturesque and rural beauty. The enchantment of its scenery had not as yet been broken, nor its winding lanes and woody dells cut up by that most ruthless monster, Steam! At the time of which we write there was no railroad in or near its vicinity. The wayworn traveller on the mail, or "long coach," as it was

called, would doubtless have cast a critical eye on this residence as he passed, and would either have called it pedantic or cockneyfied, according to the tenor of his ideas. Had it been a few miles nearer to the Great City, it would have partaken, perhaps, of the latter sentiment more generally; but, as it was above thirty miles from London, and its stillness had been undisturbed by the traffic of the Rail (in reality more retired and truer in its country tone than many places at thrice the distance), the former term was applied by the majority, and not without some reasons, for there was a quaintness and originality of taste discernible in the air of the whole place that attracted the attention and remarks of the observer. There was a good bold carriage-road from the chief lodge-gate, extending a full half-mile, and terminating in a broad slope before the principal entrance of the house.

Teevesdale had been purchased by the grandfather of the present owner: he had been a great saver of money; had lived to a very old age in much obscurity. The large

rambling building, dilapidated when he took it, sunk from neglect into absolute decay. He had buried his only son, consequently General Lindsay was his successor; and he, remaining abroad for some years after his grandfather's death, found the old mansion, on his return, perfectly uninhabitable, and immediately set to work repairing it. Numberless were his alterations, his additions: he put in a piece here, and he pulled down a piece there; ornamented and grumbled, but nothing tended to take away that mournful, solemn look from the so-long deserted mansion. It seemed always to stand like a sentinel of reproof in the mind of its present merry-hearted possessor. He had been a sojourner in sunny climes; the cheery buildings of the East had ill fitted him for so dreary a dwelling. And one bright day, having been called to celebrate the birthday of his little niece, Rose, whose father (his only brother) had died some months before his return to England, he determined on making her his heiress, and, as far as he could, acting a father's part towards her.

His resolution was fixed from that time forth. He would pull the old house down, and build one in every way appropriate to the taste of a young and joyous girl. He had no idea that a girl could be anything else than joyous. His chief idea of youth was merriment. Such he imagined, in his simple creed, it always ought to be. In earlier days, for a brief space, he had been married. But his knowledge of the depths of woman's mind was limited ; he supposed all the exploits he had read of as performed by women were fictitious ; that they were creatures to be flattered, petted, caressed, and nurtured like hothouse plants. (Perhaps it would be well if in this respect there were more who entertained the good General's opinion.) But he did not give credit to the high-souled resolves, the firm principle, and strong sense, possessed and practised by some of them, which will sometimes throw into the shade the qualities of the other sex. These he had yet to learn, but he was no bigot, as time will show. He had *character*, like other members of this book,

and scrupled not to show it; but its chief points, although singular, were not very preposterous. The modern house was raised in the place of its forlorn-looking predecessor, and the sanguine General must, indeed, have indulged in all his gay, jovial moods during its erection. Never was there such a light-some, airy building. The very ground round the old edifice had been pronounced haunted by the poor and uneducated, but the gradual appearance of the new one did away with the stigma at once and for ever. It was something between a large Swiss villa and a Chinese pagoda. Its walls had been white, but they were so painted over with curious patterns and designs that you could hardly trace the fact. It had so many windows and so many verandahs, and was so embellished by wild fancy, that many persons with a comic vein would have traced in it a strong resemblance to a huge bird-cage. It had even so struck the old General himself, upon one occasion; and, although he would not have owned it to anybody, he consoled himself by an inward comment, that it was just the thing

for so pretty a bird. No; like most people, he was jealous of his peculiarities, and very tenacious of any allusion being made to his fastidious tastes. The "pretty bird," as he called his niece, Rose Lindsay, would feign have seen, had she had her choice, the old mansion again standing, instead of its gaudy successor, which she declared made her eyes ache with its light and glitter. But the feature she most deplored in her uncle's caprice, had been the removal of the long avenue of pine-trees which had in days of yore graced the approach to the house. Of these she had heard her mother speak, and could not imagine how anybody could have had the heart to cut them down. But the General liked *all light*—he contended that shade made the mind gloomy, forgetting, in his wish to impart his own sprightly temperament to others, that it was not in his power to change those hues which in some hearts find the glare of day too painfully light, and seek, as more harmonious, the repose of the shade to lull them. The broad open carriage-road was railed off from the soft velvet sward; upon

which had also been large clumps of trees in former years; these had likewise been removed, and in their places stood groups of curious figures, vases, and all kinds of strange contrivances for flowers and birds of various description. In the summer time the view of Teevesdale Park, from the road, had a very striking effect, for there were cockatoos on their stands, and gay parrots and monkeys in their fancy cages, with many small birds of brilliant plumage in inclosures made invisible; and in other parts, fenced off, were animals from distant climes. Altogether it reminded one of a small zoological collection. The park was not large, but it was kept in the strictest order, as also were the garden grounds. But his farm was the General's favourite hobby. If he boasted of anything beside his niece, it was of his first-rate stock, and, certainly, a finer breed of Alderneys, fatter pigs, or more thriving poultry, were rarely to be found. When Rose was away, he spent a great part of each day among his live stock, for he seldom had visitors when she was not at the park, and sometimes her

absence, much to his vexation, lasted for months together; but when present, she often accompanied him to the farm, for Rose, like her uncle, in this particular, held all dumb creatures dear.

"I wonder what makes the girl so long," said General Lindsay to himself, as he impatiently walked for the third or fourth time to the southern window of the morning-room, as it was called; "when she once gets there she always stays so long."

He looked as he spoke towards the grey turrets of Morley Court, just visible through the trees which surrounded them; but we will take a peep farther than the old gentleman's eye can reach, and gaze with due interest on the stately dwelling of an age long past.

It is the time of all others to see it now, for the sun is setting, and its rays stealing athwart the old, ivy-covered walls, and peering through the dark foliage around, give an additional charm to the ancient grandeur and aristocratic bearing of the fine old building. Time had not been very busy with it, to judge by the massive heavy-

looking gateway, the old towers, and small curiously-shaped windows. It covered a very large space of ground, and had formerly had a moat surrounding it; this, however, had been done away with by its present possessor, Sir Edward Morley; and the dell around, showing where it had been, was now brilliant in its display of choicest flowers. From the terrace above descended flights of stone steps, surrounded by huge images, in keeping with the style of the architecture; and on the bold lawn below were fountains playing and sparkling in the sun-gleams. The grounds were very large, and in parts thickly wooded. There was no studied neatness; no effort of display. It appeared to be left, in some secluded paths, to yield to its native wildness, but all was, in reality, looked after with the greatest care; there was no neglect, but there was the refined love of "Nature's own magnificence." As opposite as were in character these two places, whose lands joined—Morley Court and Teevesdale Park—so were also their occupants, Sir Edward Morley and the

General. The one, delicate in form and mind, refined to fastidiousness, sensitive to very painfulness, retired in his habits and pursuits; the other, robust and hearty in constitution and manner, possessing a spirit which sometimes exceeded the due bounds of his years, and led him to rattle on in what his niece Rose called his "boyish nonsense;" but Bachelor Lindsay, as he jocosely styled himself, had his fits of depression, though the world knew it not; perhaps Rose was the only one who suspected them; but she dearly loved "her jolly old uncle," as she called him; and no diversity of his manner, however trivial, escaped her perception. Strange too, with their adverse dispositions, that the Baronet and he were fast, firm friends. But how frequently do the mainsprings of the human heart flow into the same harmonious channel, after meandering with such contrary winds upon the beaten track. Thus they joined within the kindred way, and their opposite qualities even made the enjoyment of each other's society the greater; for comfort or aid was always to be derived

from one another; and so does Nature hold her sweetest and best influence.

“Here she comes,” exclaimed the General, again moving towards the window. His good-humoured face had worked itself into an expression of anxiety at his niece’s long absence, and now the revulsion of feeling on perceiving her, gave his pleasure-lit countenance a very comical tone. “By Jove! she sits the mare well. What a figure! fit for a queen; and not even James behind her! the devil!—oh!—I forgot. She’s nearly broken me of that—. As she says, it’s like that braggadocio Doctor; but there’s some excuse for a fellow swearing after living in such hot climates as I have. But, as I’m a bachelor, she looks noble!”

Rose Lindsay would, indeed, have excited admiration in the heart of a more critical and impartial beholder than that of her doating old uncle. She did sit well, and guided the thorough-bred mare she rode with ease and grace. And now as she came cantering across the park, her swan-like form and loose tresses waving wantonly in the wind, she

would have made a fine subject for Ralph Thornton's pencil ; so thought the General, as a gleam of more serious import stole over his visage.

"Why didn't you take James, you mad-cap ?"

"What did I want with a 'poker' behind me ? She's as quiet as a lamb !" answered the breathless, blooming girl, as she jumped from the saddle into her uncle's arms.

"What's made you so long, you rogue ?"

"I could not get away before ; Sir Edward is not so well, and Lady Morley's whole time is taken up with him ; indeed, she is not well either. Gertrude says, she thinks they grow more like a bride and bridegroom every year, for they appear more wrapt up in each other every time she comes home for her holidays. She would make me stay with her and chat a bit, for, she says, she's moped to death now Edith is married, and she has nobody to speak to of her own age."

"Where's Ernest ?"

"Why, he's some years older, but still, I

should have thought, a companion for anybody. I am afraid this Gertrude gives way to fancies. I never did like her like her sister or brother. I don't think she's equal to Edith. She don't love her parents so much, or, at least, she does not seem to ; but she is very young, and fond of gaiety."

"Well, hasn't she got everything to make her gay? A good home, flowers, pets—all that her heart can wish for? What does she want more to make her gay?"

"This is not society, uncle ; of which, you know, she's fond."

"Society ! her own fresh feelings ought to be society enough for her ; a young heart like that pine for amusement ! Bad look-out ! But where's her worthy brother, my young friend ?"

"He is gone to Doverton, rather suddenly. Gertrude says, he left for London the day before yesterday, and intended proceeding to Doverton the next day. His good tutor has had another attack."

"Poor Greenhill ! I fear he is breaking."

"I fear so. Isn't it strange I've not

heard from any of them since I wrote to say I should go next week if I could?"

"I don't see anything strange in it, when your mother wrote last week and told you all about them, and that your Aunt Thornton wanted you to go as soon as you could—you wrote to say you would do so—well, what do you want to hear from them for, when you will see them so soon?"

"I don't want to hear from them particularly, only it's not like Aunt Rachel not to write; I'm afraid Eve's worse, or something."

"Pack o' nonsense! people all seem to be for ever looking on the black side; when I was a boy I didn't know what it meant."

"Well, if I thought all was right there, I don't think I would go just yet, because Gertrude is all alone."

"I've told you all along they can do very well without you, much better than I can; but you never would believe me before, but have always been for starting off on the slightest hint from that quarter, and thought nothing of leaving your poor old uncle in

the lurch. Now, I suppose, I may thank the sudden interest you take in Miss Gertrude for this, eh?"

There was a surprised expression in the old gentleman's eye, and a slightly satirical smile on his lip.

"You know, dear uncle, how very, very much I love Eve—and how I feel I shall not perhaps have her long to love, only her memory, and that is why I am so anxious always to go to her. Aunt Thornton says I always do her good; mamma repeated that again in her last letter, and, as you know, said her spirits had of late been very bad."

"Well, it's that very thing that makes me surprised at your sudden change of mind, and that you should think of that silly girl yonder, before the poor little angel who loves you so."

"I don't know that I hardly thought of her at all," stammered Rose, blushing very deeply, "but I must go and dress; it is half-past five now, and you expect the Tousaines to dinner, do you not?"

"Yes, to be sure I do—I had forgotten;

and I asked Captain Riggins—so I did. Did you know that, sly fox, and didn't it make you turn so rosy-red just now ?”

“O uncle ! and you know I cannot bear him !—if I blushed, it would be with anger about him !”

“Oh ! bravo ! that's just as it should be—couldn't be better—that's the way to begin. Taste and try before you buy ! Well, he is a handsome young chap, and plenty of money.”

“Uncle !” cried Rose, stamping her little foot, and reddening (in truth this time) from anger, “I beg you will not talk so—he's a conceited puppy—an upstart—a man void of all sense and religion !”

“Hulloa, hulloa ! pull in there, little one !” exclaimed her vivacious old uncle, clasping her slender waist, “not so hard on the poor brute ; you'll like him well enough when you know him. Don't look so angry, pretty one !”

“I know him, dear uncle,” said Rose, calmly, “as well as I ever wish to know him, and better than you do, who have

known him personally for twice the time that I have."

"Ah! well, well! young ladies are different now-a-days to what they were in my time; although then they had their whims too;" and a shade of melancholy passed over his face. "But go and dress, Rosey, and I must do the same."

"Indeed, you must, unless you want to frighten your friends away again. You do look a rum old curmudgeon!" and the saucy girl, giving him a hearty kiss, left the old General gazing after her with a fond smile, as she ran up stairs to perform her hasty toilet.

She had pulled off her riding habit, and sat for a few minutes, before ringing for her maid "to tease her," as she termed the services of that person. The flush had left her cheek, and she was now paler than usual, having generally a slight but healthy bloom, which, however, deepened or faded according to the feelings of her heart; for her's was a countenance which betrayed every sensation there—it was but a poor deceiver, when she

might have occasion, as all may have at times, for "disguise;" her hair was dark and glossy; her eyes large and full—they beamed with intelligence and truthfulness, with that keen perception of character that seemed to pierce the inmost thoughts of another; and many there were who had shrunk from their intense fascination; those hearts whose dark recesses could not bear the light of day had quailed beneath the open penetration of hers; her skin was white and clear; her forehead high and open; and though the face was certainly imperfect to the set lines of beauty, it never failed to attract attention and greater admiration than might have been bestowed on more model features with less of the soul's light upon them; perhaps there was too much of decision about the small mouth at times for one so youthful, but the expression, in harmony with the colour on her cheek and lip, was ever varying; the deep violet shade of her eyes even seemed to grow darker as their earnest steadfast gaze met those of another;—at this moment those eyes

were fixed in pensive, ay, seemingly, in troubled thought; and the head thrown back, with the dark hair falling around her, gave her a statue-like appearance. What a contrast to the animated form a few short minutes ago.

“To day’s Thursday—I needn’t go till Tuesday or Wednesday; I daresay he’ll be gone then; yes, Gertrude said they expected him back very soon on account of the election—and so it’s true what they thought—he really is engaged to Lady Emily—Gertrude seems sure of it. I wonder Lady Emily should like to talk about it so before it is properly announced, particularly to that young girl. Well, she is pretty and rich, but the last I should have thought Mr. Morley would have chosen. Gertrude seems to think they have ‘booked him’ (as she calls it); but I should never have thought Ernest Morley one to be caught in any way. Poor Lady Morley! I know she does not like her at all. What will she do when she hears about it? Oh, dear! what a funny, contrary world this is! I cannot go while he is there; I was

going away because he was here. How ridiculous uncle will think me, to be so changeable. But what can I do? I feel that I am right—I'm sure I am in this."

And Rose, still buried in her reverie, hid her face in her hands, though none were by to see the large tears she could not control.

"How wrong I am! but God will have mercy on the heart bowed down. He will pity poor human love; alas! unrequited."

A knock at the door; and, after a moment's pause, Rose opened it, with no trace of emotion save a very pallid cheek.

"Are you not well, missy? Massa tink you be late. May I send de gal?"

"Yes, Nino; send Evans directly. I am quite well, only rather tired; tell her to make haste." And Rose began to arrange her hair in its large silken roll around her head, and to adjust the pretty pink silk dress with its black lace trimmings to her fine but sylph-like form.

"Well, old boy," shouted her uncle, from the bottom of the stairs, "you've been a long time titivating; it's just half-past six

—but, by Jove, you look fit to grace a throne !”

“It’s more than you do, you tiresome child ! I do think you’ve loosened all my hair again with your hippopotamus-caresses.”

To some readers the mode of address adopted to each other by Rose and her uncle may appear to have been strange and disrespectful ; but then they do not understand, perhaps, the very good understanding existing between them. Rose was often called “a good boy,” or a “jolly fellow,” and as often returned these compliments to her uncle.

But, the company having duly arrived, the party sat down to dinner. There were six besides Rose and the General ; the latter made it a rule never to dine more than twelve, but the table was at all times furnished with the greatest profusion, sometimes even to over-abundance, with the same show of gaudy splendour which distinguished the old man’s taste in all his appurtenances.

The drawing-room was in itself a bazaar. The very bright curtains and hangings,

with the gayest of carpets and richly painted walls, made the eye ache and pine for repose, which was nowhere to be found there; for turn it where you would, it was assailed with countless ornaments of every make and description. All kinds of fancy chairs and curiously shaped lounges, with every device apparently to keep the attention perpetually at play, and ever, as Rose would say, "prevent it from settling peacefully upon one object." There was something glaring in this room, exceedingly distasteful to its future possessor, but she never alluded to it before her uncle, who fancied he was making it more congenial to her young girlish spirit by adding any fresh piece of gaiety to its many-coloured and innumerable attractions; she would only remark, "that it looked much the best at night-time, when the long, green Venetians were closed, and there was light enough from the fire to sit without lamps." He would shake his head and say, "that he did not think she was quite well; it was natural for all young people to like plenty of light."

The dining-room would have been congenial to her feelings had there not been so very large a display of plate as almost to make one feel, she said, "that he was bound to purchase something;" but it looked noble now, with pretty Rose seated at the head of the table, opposite her uncle.

On one side of her sat Mr. Tousaine, a gentleman of some consequence in the neighbourhood; and on the other, Captain Riffin, who had escorted her in to dinner. Next to him was seated a Mrs. Davenport, a distant relation of Mrs. Tousaine's, and a very great friend of Rose's grandmamma (old Mrs. Blue, of Doverton). Mrs. Tousaine sat by the General; she was an austere, wrinkled personage, with a patch on her face, and a large turban, of a very by-gone fashion, surmounting her head; her daughter looked as though she would have sunk into the ground for very fear of her, and her son not much the bolder, save that he made a desperate attempt now and then to address Miss Lindsay and enter into general conver-

sation, but was usually baulked and brought to a stand by his mother's cold fishy-looking eye.

The prevailing topic had been the forthcoming election. Sir Edward Morley had been formerly a representative of the borough, and was again a candidate ; he was a general favourite among those friends who knew him, but, from his secluded manner of living, their number was small, and he had many opponents. The majority in that county would have much preferred his son, and, indeed, the baronet wished him to reign in his stead ; but the younger Morley most firmly refused both his father's and friends' solicitations on the subject, and, although he would not willingly have denied his father any request he might make, he at last succeeded in convincing him that it would be better for him to wait a few years before taking so responsible a situation ; saying, " that he should be older then and wiser ;" for Ernest Morley looked upon such an undertaking in " its proper light,"—not upon the pomp and vanity of the position,

but upon the work he had to do—to operate for “good or evil.”

“I wonder he should go away at such a time; just, too, as his father has made Morley Court his own—a most liberal and unfatherly act now-a-days, I must confess—he must be a rare old trump, that Sir Edward; but, begging his pardon, I think Morley is a fool not to have turned all out at once and secured the fine old place to himself.”

“I differ with you, young gentleman,” said the General, glancing quickly from Captain Riggin, who had made the above speech, to Rose, who little concealed her feelings on the subject. “It would have been a base act of ingratitude to have returned his father’s unparalleled generosity in such a manner; an act Ernest Morley never could commit.”

“Is it not strange,” broke in Mr. Tousaine, “that Morley should have granted that place to his son during his lifetime?”

“Not as circumstances stand,” answered General Lindsay. “In the first place, I think the greatest wish of his heart was that

Ernest should have represented the county; he wished him to take his proper standing in society now while he lives to see and rejoice in his son's prosperity—for prosperous he feels, as I do, the noble young fellow will ever be. Morley and her ladyship both thought it advisable to vacate, and retire for some months to their beautiful but neglected estate in the West of England—Dane Priory. I believe they go there next summer for a certainty. My true-hearted boy would not hear of their leaving him before, and I dare say he will accompany them then, unless a little event takes place previously which has been whispered, but it is as yet in the bud."

"My dear Miss Lindsay, you are not well!" cried kind Mrs. Davenport; "let me go for your salts."

"Drink your wine, my girl; that ride was too much for you. On the new mare without anybody with her," he continued, turning to the company.

"I don't wonder at anything I hear, I'm sure, now," said Mrs. Tousaine spitefully;

“no, not if a young lady was to go to a steeple-chase quite by herself, or to a hunt, unattended by any friend. The present method of bringing up the young is quite repulsive to one of the olden school.”

Rose, who had by this time regained her colour, and also her composure (for her uncle's quick eye had marked her agitation, though he could not divine its cause), smiled at this sally, as indeed did the Captain and Mrs. Davenport; for the speaker looked so remarkably sour, and shook her large turban so ominously at Rose, while delivering her opinion, that it was no wonder she drew forth amusement. Mr. Tousaine seemed too accustomed to his wife's acidity to take any heed of it; but the General immediately entered with her into a long dissertation upon the mode of educating and training of the present day, &c.

While Mr. Tousaine and Mrs. Davenport were conversing upon the merits and demerits of the candidates for the ensuing parliament, and Captain Riffin was overpowering Rose with his compliments and

attention, she nevertheless lent an attentive ear for some minutes to the discourse at the other end of the table ; for, generally speaking, she had to support her uncle in his arguments with the iron-mouthed lady of the turban, he owning, in her absence, "that she bullied him so that he did not know whether he stood on his head or his heels."

Hearing, however, from time to time, his favourite phrase, "as I'm a bachelor," and seeing that he appeared quite capable, for once, to take his own part, she turned to the guests around her, and did the honours of her position with gentle dignity and grace.

"Are you not surprised, Miss Lindsay, at Mr. Morley absenting himself just at this glorious time, when there is a little going on here, for a wonder, in the way of excitement, to do away with the usual unbearable monotony?" asked the Captain, looking most admiringly at Rose.

"No; I cannot say I am surprised. I don't think Mr. Morley cares for such excitement much; and even if he did, the

severe indisposition of his good, kind friend, Mr. Greenhill, would outweigh every such obstacle. He is very ill, poor man. This is his third attack, I believe. He loves Mr. Morley like his own son, and I think his love is fully repaid."

"Ah! very delightful, to be sure; quite uncommon, too. But this glorious weather, the very height of the shooting season—why, the birds fall like chaff! Such famous sport I've seldom seen. He'll lose it all."

"Mr. Morley does not even weigh a pheasant's life with that of a human creature, much less the pleasure of taking it!" observed Rose, while a smile of bitter contempt curled her full red lip.

The Captain fidgeted, and finally shrank back into his boots (as the saying goes),—did not speak again for some moments, and then, in a mincing tone, condescended to address young Tousaine, who, quite elated thereby, drank more wine than was good for him, and began to make himself rather conspicuous, just as Miss Lindsay, catching the

affrighted glance of his mother, arose to withdraw, followed by the other ladies.

"Are we to be fellow-travellers, dear Rosey, next week?" asked Mrs. Davenport, seating herself very comfortably on one of the luxuriant lounges in that gayest of all gay drawing-rooms.

"I shall be very happy, I am sure. Grandmamma wrote mamma word that she expected you shortly. How glad I am you are going so soon. What day do you think of leaving here? I suppose you stay in London for a day or two?"

"Well, that depends partly on engagements which I am bound to fulfil," replied Mrs. Davenport, bowing to Mrs. Tousaine, who was taking her daughter to task for encouraging the disgraceful conduct of her brother, by smiling at him when he was filling his glass so often. "Mrs. Tousaine purposes giving a large dinner-party next Monday," added Mrs. Davenport, turning to Rose, "for which I believe you and your uncle have received invitations; and on Wednesday I think there is to be an evening

entertainment—is there not, Mrs. Tousaine?—at which I have promised to be present.”

“And at which I hope also Miss Lindsay will honour us,” put in the turbaned lady, trying to smile graciously.

Rose bowed, and said, “Thank you.”

“After that, my dear, I am at your disposal,” observed Mrs. Davenport.

“Oh, that will do beautifully for me. I did not want to go before Thursday or Friday.”

“Then let it be next Thursday, my love. We will sleep that night at your dear mother’s, if she will take me in with you, and proceed the next day to Doverton.”

“That will be delightful!” exclaimed Rose; and so it was settled.

“I thought Miss Lindsay so used to travelling alone that she did not need a companion,” remarked Mrs. Tousaine, who could not bear to hear of any project in which she was not concerned.

“But you will agree that a companion is more pleasant,” observed Rose.

“Only *you* are so bold and independent in

comparison with most young females, are you not?" asked Turban, spitefully.

"I cannot agree that Rose ever travels alone," said Mrs. Davenport, with some warmth, "when old Jaffer, the coachman, is always seated outside the coach to London with her, and has strict orders to see her safely on the following day as far as M——, where she is put into a fly, if her uncle's brougham or her grandmamma's pony-chaise is not there to receive her; so I can't call that going *alone*."

"I never have been to London alone, for I always feel so nervous there; but I have sometimes made Uncle Lindsay very angry by sending Jaffer back the next day, when he has put me safely into the coach, and seen after my luggage: but I don't see any great boldness in that," added Rose, laughing, "for I can't very well hurt then, boxed up till I get to M——, unless some one were to run away with me at one of the stations."

"You don't premeditate insult, then, or any of the annoyances which no unprotected

female is exempt from—especially the young and giddy. When I was your age I was never allowed to go ten yards alone,” remarked she of the turban, bridling up.

“I dare say not; some are not to be trusted. There is a great difference,” said Rose, coolly, “both in young and old.”

This rather disagreeable turn of conversation was here interrupted by Mrs. Davenport asking Miss Tousaine for a little music, that lady well knowing from experience that when once the fingers of this young person touched the piano they defied all other sounds, which perhaps at this particular moment was rather suitable than otherwise. A mutual glance passed between Mrs. Davenport and Rose, and then the stifling uproar upon the instrument began, and had not terminated when the gentlemen appeared.

“By Jove!” roared the General, thrusting a finger into each ear.

Mrs. Davenport could not conceal her merriment at the sport she had caused, for the poor lady of the turban looked as black as thunder, while the Captain laughed till

his eyes watered. The old gentleman's action and look of horror were comical in the extreme. If there was anything he held in utter abhorrence, it was to hear what he called a "drumming on the piano." He was a true lover of music, but of that music which touches the soul. A simple air, played with expression and real feeling, was worth all the rattling and scientific bursts of execution as performed by many a Miss Tousaine.

"Dear me!" he exclaimed, when at last the young lady ceased with three chords of tremendous import. "You must be very tired. What an effort to be sure!"

The old General was utterly aghast. He had never heard such a "fearful row" before, as he told Rose afterwards. Seating himself by Mrs. Tousaine, he, at a sign from his niece, forbore any further remark, and, as the coffee was handed round, was heard descanting upon the wonderful nimbleness of the limbs in the present day, in an undertone to Mrs. Tousaine, who sat bolt upright, and looked very offended; for she had sharp

eyes, although there was a caste in her right one. She had observed all that passed; while her daughter, imagining the applause had been great, gazed with beaming satisfaction upon the group.

Uncle Lindsay got from nimbleness of limbs to nimbleness of fingers, in spite of Rose's entreating glances, and wound up by saying "He thought music-masters out-and-out humbugs," at which the Turban took fire,—

"After paying M. le Carte two guineas a lesson, and he pronouncing her child the best and most promising pupil he had ever had, to have such a master called a *humbug*! It was monstrous!"

The General drew in his horns; for, though natural in all he said and did, and abhorring disguise, he was a true gentleman at heart, and felt himself in the wrong, he being his antagonist's host. Therefore, he allowed that M. le Carte must be "an exception, such a master as he had proved himself to be;" and when something like peace had been restored, Rose sat down and played her

uncle's favourite air, "The Last Rose of Summer," with variations; and so striking was the contrast—so sweet the melody, the dreamy pathos, the rich tone of intense feeling, the effect on nerve and soul, that a long silence followed its soft, yearning echoes, and lasted till the influence had sweetly died away.

After this, the Captain's looks and manner became so excessively tender towards the performer, that she was fain to take shelter beside her old friend Mrs. Davenport, until that lady was called away by the indefatigable General, who would not have been happy without his favourite rubber.

Thus, while the four elders were employed, the four juniors were left to amuse each other, and there being but little congeniality of feeling between them, Rose was not sorry when the evening closed, and the visitors departed. Tired in body and mind, she lay down upon her bed; but her thoughts were too busy for sleep—they wandered incessantly to the words Gertrude had used concerning her brother.

“Yes, you may depend upon it, they are engaged.” She had added “I am quite sure about it, by what Lady Emily told me. I did not like to ask her point-blank about it, because, you know, she is so much older than I am; but she said, ‘Little Gertrude, you shall be my bridesmaid, and I shall often have you to stay with me, you are such a nice, merry little thing.’ Oh! I am sure they are engaged.”

Again and again did Rose repeat all that had been said to her. There was something speaking within which made it difficult for her to conceive the fact which Gertrude appeared so convinced of; yet, again her uncle had told her how Sir Edward’s heart was set upon this match. The lady, though some years Ernest’s senior, was rich, of an old high-standing family, and passed as a belle in the circle to which she belonged. Then, again, Lady Morley had called her a heartless coquette—the last woman she would choose for her son. This was perhaps the only point on which the fond couple had differed, and Lady Morley had told Rose her

opinion of Lady Emily in confidence ; but she had also told her, which was more to the purpose, that Ernest liked his father's choice but little better than she herself did. Gertrude was a silly little thing ; she might have been mistaken after all, or she might have exaggerated what Lady Emily had told her, and, more than all, she might have spoken the wishes of her own heart, little dreaming the pang she cost another, for Gertrude seemed bent upon this marriage as a stepping-stone to the pathway of her own fame and future gaiety. Her auditor perceived that she imagined the grandeur of her future life dependent upon her brother's alliance, and saw the motives that might prompt her, in her simplicity, to speak as she had done. Still Lady Emily had told her "she should be her bridesmaid !" Surely she would not invent such a speech ; therefore, there would appear some truth in what she had related. "Yet, could it be ?" argued Rose. "Three weeks ago, in the old Chestnut-walk, did he not almost tell me !—ah ! his dear eyes did quite. And, oh ! how I have loved him !"

And the poor girl hid her face in her pillow and sobbed aloud.

"I will not quite believe it," at length she said, "until I know it, which must be soon—if it is true."

For hours did she lie awake, turning over in her mind every little word and look of endearment, and so many now recurred to her remembrance that she could not bring herself to think they had been mere signs of friendship; yet Ernest Morley was so kind to all, he may have meant no more; and her own rapt heart may have misconstrued the gentle tone and the fond beam of his kindling eye. It might, indeed! and bitter was the thought and scalding the tears which followed. At last sleep overcame her; but it was troubled and shadowy, and when she awoke, weary and unrefreshed, the morning had far advanced.

"It must be very late, Morris," she exclaimed, as the housemaid entered the room.

"It is, miss; but master said I was on no account to disturb you. He has gone down to the farm. He would not let me

wake you to bring you this letter. Shall I get you your breakfast, miss ; you look so tired."

Rose had hurriedly broken the seal of her letter, seeing it bore the Doverton post-mark, and did not reply to the housemaid's query till it was repeated, so eager was she to peruse its contents. It was from her Aunt Thornton, begging her to come to Doverton as soon as she could, for that they were very uneasy about Eve, whose spirits had been very sadly of late, and who had, they feared, ruptured another vessel. She had expressed a wish for Rose, whom Mrs. Thornton again urged, if her engagements would permit, to set off as soon after the receipt of this letter as possible, for that she cheered the dear child when nothing else could. "I wanted your dear mother to join us," added Mrs. Thornton ; "but, as usual, she will not leave her snug home. She has old Mrs. Campbell staying with her, so she will not be alone ; but, you know, she is never dull." In a postscript, Mrs. Thornton stated, "that Mr. Morley had arrived, which she supposed

Rose knew ; that her uncle thought very badly of Mr. Greenhill—so, she imagined he would not leave Doverton just yet ; that he was as kind and attentive as ever, and she was glad he was with them, for things did not seem any more satisfactory between Ralph and Dr. Thornton.” Here, then, was a total change for Rose’s plans. Self was the last thing she thought about. “I must get up directly,” she murmured, “and drop a line to Mrs. Davenport, telling her I cannot wait for her. I must tell dear uncle directly about poor Eve, and he will spare me on Monday. I shall start by the three o’clock coach, in the morning, so that I can go straight on my journey. I shall get to Doverton in the evening. I shall be rather tired, but I don’t care.” She hastily dressed herself ; her cheek was pale and her face looked unusually sad. “I wish *he* was not there. Oh ! that I could have escaped this trial,” fell from her lips. “I have never dreaded going to dear Doverton before ; but now, there seems a dark shadow hanging over it. I can’t be well to feel so nervous ; but

it seems as if something was going to happen—as if there was a cloud about to burst. How foolish Ralph is ! I know that tires dear Eve !” And with these reflections she completed her simple toilet, and fell on her knees in earnest prayer. Hers was not a nature to give way to gloom, but an insufferable weight hung over her spirits, which, however, diminished as her heart’s voice responded its petition to the Ear which is ever open, and her tearful eyes were raised to that Eye which is never turned away : “ Whatever befalls, Thine hand, O God, will lead me, and Thine arm support me. Fearless will I face the future ; for as my day is, so shall my strength be !”

CHAPTER V.

“ There was once the flow of reason,
The firm sway upon the brow ;
But the gem hath fled the casket,
It is void and cheerless now.”

“ Go, Dreamer ! Go ! unto another shore
Though rough seas break and billows madly roar,
Though in the tempest man’s brief life is o’er,
He was not made to question, but adore ! ”

It was a lovely afternoon on which, according to appointment, Ernest Morley and Ralph Thornton met at the foot of Sea View Hill, to proceed along the sands, for the tide was down (at least only just upon the turn), towards Black Rock—that part of the shore so called from the dark shade of the cliffs there, also from some equivocal deeds which rumour whispered those cliffs witnessed in times past—near which spot

stood the two desolate cottages described in our opening chapter. The weather had been excessively warm during the last few days ; there had been no rain for some time, and the air that afternoon would have been sultry but for the gentle breeze which came in delicious softness from the sea, and ever and anon fanned refreshingly the youthful brows of the pedestrians. Oh ! it was glorious down upon that shore. The sun shone in all its splendour, and lit up the white cliffs, and the dancing waves, and the bright sails, as in the distance they glided by, with its silvery brightness, and sparkled brilliantly upon the fairy-like wings of the sea-fowl soaring on high. There was not a cloud to be seen in the clear firmament, that vast, open, calm expanse ; the rumbling murmur of the ocean, as it fulfilled its never-changing and appointed course—the glowing scene—the hushed air—all seemed to speak of hope and joy, to give that freedom to the spirit only felt at such times and in such places ; and, oh ! how appreciated by those whose susceptible hearts can

respond more fully to its welcome influence—to Nature's own sweet truthful voice! To them it is like the loosening of the captive's chains—the free use of limbs after pain and thralldom. Even so it appeared to Ernest Morley.

“It made him feel,” he said, “so happy!” and the balmy dew of such feeling had, it would seem, dropped faintly on the heart of Ralph Thornton, for his countenance wore a more genial aspect than usual. “I only fear it is too beautiful to last,” continued Morley. “It is very warm, I daresay overpowering, to walk up in the village, but, as we have both dined, I suppose we may take our time, and saunter leisurely. Your poor model is sure to be at home, I conclude; all times must be alike to her. I wonder if the lovely weather inspirits her—if her poor lost mind appreciates it.”

“I should think not,” was the laconic reply.

In vain did Ernest endeavour to draw his companion into conversation. For some time all the answers he could elicit to his

many observations for that purpose were concise and indifferent, and he was beginning to wonder how anybody could be so cold and distant in manner when all was so charming around them. A slight smile was perceivable on his manly lip as he also thought how much more enjoyable the walk would have been with a sociable being beside him; and, as pretty well a last resource, he made one more effort, and alluded to the charms of the scenery again, this time hitting on the right theme, for he spoke of the "light and shadow," which immediately stirred the depths of the artist's soul, and led him to expatiate on a subject where he was so perfectly at home, and certain to point out effects unperceived by his auditor before. That he had an artist's eye for colouring was plainly evident, and a first-rate impression of the magnificent; and Morley, as he listened to the glowing language of the young enthusiast, could not but admire the fine taste he displayed, and ponder on the warmth which lay under so cold an exterior.

These young men had been known to each

other for some few years—as far as the knowledge of each other's "being" went. But Morley was very seldom at Doverton now; as he had grown into manhood he had become necessary to his father in many ways, for the baronet's health was very precarious, and his son was his help and stay, his adviser and his companion; and it was only, as was now the case, when his old and revered tutor's health failed, that Ernest was to be found on a visit there. Ralph had been down to Morley Court two or three times since Ernest left college, but the intimacy never ripened into anything like friendship; his nature, or at least his bearing, was so forbidding to the slightest familiarity, that he had passed from childhood, through boyhood, into early manhood, without knowing that great blessing, a friend of his own sex. Lady Morley, who was of a meek, retiring disposition, held the haughty youth in something like awe, and treated him ever with a gentle dignity; her daughters, especially Gertrude, the younger, who was still single, confessed she had no patience

with the sullen boy ; and the baronet, refined in his nature and a devoted admirer of the fine arts, was at a loss to comprehend the constant rebuffs he had met with, in his attempts to “draw out” the young artist ; for, susceptible himself to a degree, he had been most delicate in his attentions and efforts towards sociability with him ; and in spite of a sympathetic feeling he could not refrain from entertaining for one, whose natural talent promised so much, he did not care to patronize him, or further his pursuits in any of the ways he had it in his power to do ; and thus Ralph unwittingly lost a good staunch friend,—for had he shown a different nature there would have been few plans more congenial to Sir Edward than to have had Ralph at the old Court altogether, both to have indulged him in his favourite study, and to have found in him a companion for his only son. As to the old General, he plainly stated that he was disgusted with the young upstart, and never wished to see his lank, miserable face—“taking all the brightness off his birds and flowers, and

filling him ever with the blue devils"—in his park again. The truth was, in his last visit to Morley Court, Ralph had given the good General mortal offence, and the previous feeling of indifference towards the "strange lad" (whom the old gentleman had never considered "quite right in his head" before, and had excused accordingly,) had now ripened into positive dislike, for he had touched his weak point. Yes, he—Ralph Thornton—so tenacious himself, so easily irritated at a slight allusion to his own peculiar feelings, had mercilessly wounded those of the old man, perhaps without meaning to wound, but his own tenacity should have taught him better.

One day, when he had just finished (to do him justice), a beautifully executed painting of the antique Court—with its noble sweep of lawn in front, fine trees, and playing fountains—when all had gathered round to admire and to praise—the General was announced, who was certainly louder and heartier than any in his laudatory congratulations; and, turning to the performer,

bestowed on him what he considered to be a very great favour or privilege, by telling him that he should be very pleased "if he would make just such a picture of his place, introducing some of his favourite birds and animals ;" and the old gentleman, once off on his hobby, began to name those he wished included, when Ralph stopped him rudely, by abruptly refusing, and with so bad a grace, as to meet with hidden censure from all parties present.

"His brush," he said, "nor yet his pencil, would ever do justice to a pagoda or a cockatoo."

The way in which these words were uttered, with their accompanying sneer, sank deep into the General's breast ; who, in his wrath, was very nearly beginning to swear at the offender, when, remembering a promise he had made to a certain young lady of his acquaintance, he restrained his vehemence, "and like a good boy," as she afterwards told him, called the artist a "stuck-up young puppy," instead.

Thus you see Ralph Thornton was no

favourite in Morley's part of the world; no more than, we are sorry to say, he was elsewhere.

"Your description of the shadows on those cliffs is very fine, Ralph," said Ernest, after a pause. "And all is, as you say, 'light and shade,'—even our own lives. I often think how strange it is, that to enjoy *light* we must have *shadow*: for instance, to feel the true beauty of a day like this, we must go through days dull, dark, and dreary; to appreciate the full vigour of limb, the elasticity of spirit, the buoyancy of health, we must know the sad contrast of all—limbs stretched and feeble, weary depression, pain and sickness. Verily we are but children of a larger growth while in this changing scene!"

"Why are we in this changing scene at all, I want to know?" muttered Ralph.

"Oh! that is not for us to enquire, why man is placed here; it is a fruitless question, seeing the reason never can be known till time shall be no more."

"No! it certainly is a riddle, why one

should be thrust into life unconsulted, to be tossed up and down like a shuttlecock knocked about at pleasure. There is only one conclusion I can ever come to," said Ralph, bitterly.

"May I ask what that is?" demanded Morley, gazing curiously at his companion.

"Oh! I should shock you," with a derisive laugh.

"I don't think you would; I'm not easily shocked, I believe."

"Well, then, the only thing I can imagine is, that we are born for the sport of a Great Tyrant!"

"Good God!" exclaimed Morley.

"I told you I should shock you," with a sneer.

"To deny that you have surprised me, would be untrue; but I have heard of such sentiments, though, I must confess, I have never yet met with any one possessing them. And this fair creation, these myriad works of an Almighty hand, do you think these are also formed by this self-same

Tyrant?" asked Morley, with an ill-concealed shudder.

"I really never thought about it; I suppose they are for His pleasure. But what matters it what I think, what anybody thinks; neither our thoughts or our actions are our own,—we cannot be accountable for what we are compelled to do, whether we like it or not?"

"Ralph, Ralph! I beseech of you to pause and consider well, before you drink too deeply of the poisonous water you are tasting—before you allow your better reason to be swallowed up in so fearful a creed! Truly, truly, do you say we are 'the sport of a tyrant!' There is a 'tyrant' indeed, making sad havoc within your heart; and, if you do not take care, he'll clutch it for ever within his deadly grasp. He does indeed sport with us at all times—but, oh! let him not take such hold of you, Ralph—you! whom the same God formed; whose all-wonderful hand is displayed now so vividly around us; who has given you the power and the bright talent to enjoy His choice productions so much!"

"I suppose everybody may be allowed his own opinion," was the haughty reply.

"Certainly, every one ~~has~~ a right to his own ; though, I am convinced, the time will come when you will own yours wrong. But if"—continued Morley, noting the impatient gesture of the other—"I have offended you, in giving mine, I am sorry, and I have done, although there are a few things I should much like to have said, if you would have taken them kindly, as they would be meant."

"Pray go on ; don't mind me. I have a strange spirit—it would never brook control."

"Far be it from me to wish to control you ; I would only, if possible, endeavour to lead you to think differently," said Ernest, with a shade of sorrow in his tone.

"You cannot give me any much more satisfactory answer to my question, however, as to why we are *here*. If this God is so good, you believe in, why does He allow us to be so tormented and trifled with ? In your own speech about 'light and shade,' you

admit we are the mere puppets of His humour."

"God forbid my words ever should have implied any such meaning. That we are puppets it is true—but we are the puppets of our own fallen nature, of our own weakness. The Almighty can take no pleasure in any of His creatures' sufferings—which, they, for the most part, bring upon themselves. If trials are allotted to us, it is not for us to enquire 'why they are sent,' but to bear them as patiently as we can; and, though they may seem very severe, they are oftentimes the cause of very good results. As to the questions of 'why we are here,' 'why we are afflicted,' they are not only, as I said before, fruitless—for mortal knowledge was never yet, nor will ever be, permitted to extend far enough to solve them—but they are also very wrong. It is not for us to fathom that of which the Almighty has purposely left us in ignorance, or to presume to enquire into His dispensations: all His movements are ever full of mercy and wisdom. And why? I would ask (because

our view is limited in the moral world, even as it is in the natural one ; for eyes cannot pierce beyond that sky), are we to cleave to the evil "instead of the good, when in every age good has ever been known to predominate ? Why are we to believe in cruelty and injustice, when proof is for ever going on round us, that they can endure only for a time, and that right and justice will always overcome them at last ?"

"But why should injustice be at all—or cruelty ? Why, if God, as you say, is all goodness, all powerful, should He have allowed sin to enter the world ?" was the rejoinder to Morley's earnest question.

"Ralph, I again repeat, it is not for us to dive beyond what we are permitted to see. The deviation of man from his duty,—from the upright path in which God had placed him,—must have been a fearful disorder in the moral system of the universe. You can imagine that in a far lesser degree in the natural world, if a star had moved from its appointed place ; if, when the Almighty had pronounced 'all good,' the

sun had omitted to shed its rays, or the moon her softer light."

"Well, but according to your doctrine, the same power who created them could have rectified the defects, if He did not think proper to prevent them."

"Most assuredly; in the constitution of the world would have been found the remedy, but in man's fall there could not be any such. A creature made in God's image, endowed with the sense and the will to act, the tenement of an immortal soul—his fall was of a far more awful consequence than that of a planet from its sphere, conveying far more fearful results."

"I should have thought that that could have been rectified too."

"And has it not been rectified? Surely, at a terrible price! The enormity of the offence must have been beyond comprehension to have needed the second in the Godhead to descend to earth to take our flesh and nature upon Him,—to suffer the most agonizing death the mind of man can conceive."

“ You allude to what the Bible says ; how are we to believe what a parcel of men, like ourselves, chose to write, perhaps to play upon our fancies ? ”

“ The Bible has been proved to be indisputably true ; putting that aside, if you read it carefully and consistently, it will prove itself. No frail men, like ourselves, could have penned such comfort and consolation for future generations—comfort that has descended from age to age, in spite of oppression and wrong. The very language will tell you that the writers were inspired. They were agents of God.”

“ Well, I cannot say I know much about it, further than having heard some fools read long yarns out of it in a dolorous voice in churches. The language, as you say, is, nevertheless, very fine ; that has struck me, I must own, though they murder it so.”

“ It would appear much finer, far more beautiful, if you read it yourself.”

There was a long silence. Morley, as we have said before, was one of those beings who are never so happy as when they are

serving a fellow-creature ; his generous heart was beating with fervour in the cause he felt he had but poorly taken up. If it must be confessed, though his lips were silent, a prayer rose in his heart for the unhappy youth beside him ; and then he thought, should he say more ?—or had he said enough for one time ?

It was a tender, a delicate, a divine subject ; he felt his inability to handle it as he would wish, and yet he was secretly determined to leave no means unstirred to draw the wandering soul back to its Maker. His was not the “charity that seemeth.” He was not like the many young men of his age, —ay, and older ones, too,—who will throw a half-crown or a shilling to the first beggar that comes in their way, while too often the money is not theirs to give—too often belonging to some honest tradesman who sues in vain for his due. Oh ! sadly has this most “excellent gift” been wronged and abused. Sadly has its holy name been misapplied ! No ; his was the charity “that is not puffed up,” but “hopeth all things.”

“ Well, I daresay all you have said is right enough ; and you are, at any rate, more favoured than I am in your ideas, as well as in every other circumstance. Again, I say, I do not consider myself accountable for my ideas and my circumstances—they are not of my own choosing.”

“ Your circumstances are not ; but you must pardon me if I again tell you that your ideas are in your own power—free agents to do your will.”

“ Do you mean to say I made my own mind ?” demanded Ralph, almost angrily.

“ No ; but He who made it, made it upright—no more deformed than He has made your body. He gave you sense,—I would almost say extra sense to many—a love of the grand and beautiful, which is one of the chief orders of Christianity ; for the ‘ grand and the beautiful ’ must be connected with the ‘ good.’ You say your ideas are not your own ; I maintain that they are too much ‘ your own,’ as much as they have been too ‘ little guided.’ In early youth it is considered best to instil into the mind some idea of a

business or profession, by which that youth is hereafter to earn his bread. It is wise to impress the heart during that season, which never returns—that season in which, free to thought, it can retain the best; if left till after years, you could hardly expect the same proficiency in merchandise or science. Must it not be the same with religion? Of how much importance the early seedling! How direful the effects of the neglect!”

“Exactly; am I accountable for this?—accountable for the dull brutes it has been my destiny to dwell with?—responsible for their stupidity in crushing all the better feelings of my nature?”

“Certainly not; you are not accountable for the deeds of others; but the very words you use will prove to you that you are perfectly capable of guiding your own desires, and that you are master of your own thoughts, not like the poor creature we are going to see, without intellect or memory; not like the brute which perisheth, but gifted with the power to think and to act in the part allotted you—which power will be strength-

ened according to your need, if you seek for assistance at the right source. But all I would pray you to do now is, instead of watching for, and pondering upon, the defects of your fellow-men, and the ills and evils of life, to look diligently for all that is great and good around you, and, believe me, you will always find the 'good' greatly over-balance the 'bad;' for," continued Morley, who thought this first great step would be a chief point gained, "you will, upon reflection, agree to the fact, that 'evil' can only endure for a time, that it cannot last; while 'good' will always, as it ever has done, triumph and abound for ever. Take, for example, a man's life stained with crime and guilt: though he may appear to all the world to prosper, to flourish in his wickedness—his misdeeds undiscovered—holding a fair name with a foul heart, ay, even to the bed of death; even then, will not his conscience, his own memory, be punishment enough, to say nothing of a hereafter?—pangs, such as you or I are unable to define; while, on the other hand, have you never—yes, you surely

must have experienced, what time has ever proved, though you may have heeded it not, that a good action, however minute, however insignificant in its detail, will never fail, sooner or later, to bring its own reward."

He ceased, flushed with excitement, with the earnestness of his speech; and Ralph, as he cast a side glance at the kindling eye, beaming with eloquence, thought he had never seen the speaker look so truly handsome before. But his brain was busy; those last words had touched a chord vibrating strongly within him. How many instances in his past life rushed to recollection to prove them—small incidents, unthought of, unrecorded there before, deemed too trivial to be noticed, came in full force to his memory now—one of a very recent date, scarcely worth acknowledging, still it had brought him pleasure. In relieving a little child, he had gained what was to him a great reward—"the study of a fine head." Well might Morley say our vision is limited. Was that all the "good" that should arise?—all that mortal eye could trace within its narrow

compass. But as he pondered, unknown to him—a vista had been opened, through the dense cloud, to his heart, through which a bright, strong light was faintly gleaming.

They had turned the angle of the cliff called Black Rock, and the cottages were displayed to view. By the projection of this dark part of the cliff there was a large cavern formed on the inner side, or rather the side nearest the cottages ; and as they turned the point of the prominence they beheld the object of the “study”—the poor lunatic—seated on a fragment of rock at the entrance of the cave. She had twined seaweed in her hair, which hung around her in wild disorder, and she appeared very busy with some long, wet pieces in her lap ; her head was bent down, and she did not recognize the intruders for some minutes. Her dress was black, and still bore the resemblance of silk, although miserably dim and ragged with wear ; but what added greatly to the singularity of her appearance was a large white pinafore, fastened behind her like a child’s. She looked up as they advanced, and in the vacant eye and

open mouth Morley could barely discern the original of the portrait he had admired so much. She uttered a strange, low cry, and started up, gathering the weeds in her pinafore. She was rather above the usual height of women, and, although worn and emaciated, was finely formed, and her figure gave evidence of having once been commanding and good. Ralph took the portrait from his folio, held it before her, and she, with a shrill kind of laugh, darted off towards the cottage.

"She will look very different, you'll see, when they give her the dolly," said Ralph, trying to be jocular, but his companion could see that his merriment was assumed.

"Has she always been like this, poor soul?" asked Morley.

"Oh, no! the woman who takes care of her says she has only been as bad as this twice since they took her baby away."

"Baby! is she a widow, then?"

"I'm sure I don't know. I've never asked much about her. She must be, though—didn't you see her wedding-ring?"

"No ; I was too much taken up with her face, poor creature."

"I remember now ; the woman (Mrs. Bertram), told me she had thrown it away twice, but they found it each time, and when she was asleep they put it on again."

"I wonder how she came to be here, under the care of such poor people. Hers may be a strange history !—eventful and sorrowful. We don't know half the trouble going on round us. Who is that yonder ?"

"That is old Bertram, the father-in-law of the woman I spoke of."

"If you have a little time to spare, let us go to him. I would like to speak to him. How very old he looks !"

He did look old indeed, as they approached and could more plainly see his features. He was sitting on the side of his boat, surrounded by fishing pots or baskets, such as are used for catching lobsters. One of these he was mending, and his figure had hidden a little girl who was standing behind him, intently watching a large man-of-war just seen in the distance. Turning her head

suddenly, she recognized Ralph and his companion, whose footsteps had yet been unheard on the soft sand.

"Grandfather ! here's the painter gentleman, and another gentleman," she cried.

The old man rose, touching his sailor's hat ; as Morley's cheerful voice gave him " Good afternoon !" he turned his dim eyes from Ralph on to the face of the former, wherein something seemed to attract them, for they remained fixed there for a little while. Perhaps Morley's kind gaze had solicited one in return, for after a while the scrutiny appeared to have given satisfaction, and the old man answered his observation of it being lovely weather, with a smile which looked rather an unusual appendage to his withered visage. Not that old Bertram's face was dull or stern, but the prevailing expression was that of placid solemnity, mild thoughtfulness. Perhaps there is no finer sight upon this earth, or one to call forth more delightful reverie, than a noble-looking and noble-minded old man. Be he rich or poor, in mood grave or gay, with that gaiety

suited to his years, and tintured with a holy feeling—looking back upon past life as a long dream of joy and woe, gone through with steadfast faith and manly heart—ready for the last scene, for he has done his best, and braved the storm—surely he is a blessed sight, indeed!

“Ay, ay, sir. It was a gem of a morning, rather too heavy now with heat for lasting; but when the sun rose, sir—when you gentlemen folks, as I expect, were in your beds—that was the time, sir; ah, it was glorious then!”

“You must be a very early riser for your years if you are up at sunrise,” said Morley, who quite delighted in listening to the old man.

“Ah, sir! I’m not always up now,” in a sorrowful voice.

“No,” put in the child; “grandfather is sometimes in bed a whole week at a time.”

“You see, sir, I’m very old, and I’m breaking fast; but I must not murmur. I’m over man’s given time, and I’ve had a long, happy pilgrimage, by the blessing of God; though I have had my afflictions to bear,—

they have served the right end, and I'm quite ready, waiting His call. But I must beg your honour's pardon for running on so; I've not said so much for many a day, for I never see anybody but them in my own place, barring this young gentleman, who's come a-painting our poor lady here. Excuse me, sir, there's something in your honour's face I like to look on, and something in *you* makes *me* speak."

"I like to hear you," answered Morley, stroking the little girl's head; "and I can only hope, when I die, when my time comes, I may feel like you do."

"Ah! you mustn't talk of dying yet; you've got many happy years in store—I read it in your eye—and you've a deal of good to do. But you're right to think of the end that must come to all, as my poor girl used to tell me—I mean by my girl, sir, my wife; she's gone on her way before me, but I'm often with her, sir, in my sleep, and soon I hope to be with her for ever; sometimes I think, if it were not for that I should be loth to leave the world, even now; it is very

beautiful, and there is much in my poor way even to enjoy. But I tire you, gentlemen," added he, noticing Ralph's movement towards the cottage; and Ernest, saying he should see him before they left, followed.

The little girl had run on first, and exclaimed, "Oh, aunty! that kind gentleman that's come with the painter gentleman has given me a whole bright shilling! Oh! he does look so good! And he has been talking so to grandfather! Here he comes—look!"

Mrs. Bertram stood at the door, and, as they entered, said she feared Lady Vernon would not sit as well as usual, for that she had become very impatient at being kept without her bundle so long, and that she (Mrs. Bertram) had been afraid to give it to her, lest she should get tired before her sitting was over.

Ralph said half an hour would suffice for what he wanted; he prepared his palette while Morley was forced to turn to the window to conceal his emotion. The poor creature had looked wild, almost savage, on their entrance, and now that an old pil-

low, rolled in a cloth, was placed in her arms, her features grew radiant with pleasure; but her joy at first was almost more sad to look upon than her grief had been.

"I must wait a few minutes," said Ralph, in an undertone, to Ernest; "she is always like this at first."

But gradually the almost delirious light passed from her eyes, the features subsided into a beautiful yet melancholy calm, and she rocked her bundle gently, and made a monotonous sound like a low moaning.

"Is she a widow?" asked Morley, in a whisper to Mrs. Bertram.

She put her finger to her lip, and made a gesture to him to enjoin silence; then moving to the door at the back of the apartment, beckoned him to follow; and leading him into a kind of kitchen, small, scantily furnished, but scrupulously clean, she closed the door, and turning to him, said, with a curtsy, "This is a poor place, sir, for such as you to come into, but maybe you'll excuse it, for I am quite afraid to speak about her in her hearing; for, though she seems not to hear,

she will tell me all I have said in her sleep, and go on frightfully; at least she has done so before, once, when I told a lady 'down in our part' a little about her, and a little is all that I know. But you asked if she is a widow; she was brought to me as one, sir,—I have never known to the contrary. She was very young, but she wore a wedding-ring, and was introduced to me as Mrs. Vernon; but since her calamity, poor thing, she has called herself 'Milady.' I think it was from hearing herself spoken of as the 'lady,' and the 'poor lady,' you know, sir; so now we always call her Lady Vernon."

The woman spoke well, beyond what you would expect from one in her station—so Morley thought; and there was a degree of reserve in her manner, which plainly indicated that she would not approve of being questioned too closely; and, dropping her voice as she concluded, she looked from Morley to the door, as though she thought she had said enough, and their conference should be at an end. But his curiosity was far from satisfied,—not from any petty feel-

ing, but from pure pity and interest in the poor being whose sad case had moved his sympathy so much.

“I hope you will not think me too prying if I ask you what calamity you allude to? Believe me, I do not ask from any officious motive; but if she is without friends, and I could assist her in any way, I should be too happy to do so.”

“Ah, sir! she is indeed without friends; I believe I am her only one. You do not look, sir, as you say, a mere meddler; but I have reasons—very great reasons, sir—for keeping a quiet tongue about her—reasons that I cannot explain to a stranger. The calamity I spoke of, sir, is—she once had a lovely baby!” Here the woman turned her face away, and wiped her eyes with her apron. “A little angel, sir! and the wretches took it away! She has been mad ever since; she was wretched enough before. But when I think of her as she was then—when she first came to ——, when I first saw her, in all her beauty! and so young—so young!”

She fairly broke down now, and sobbed aloud.

"But, my good woman, had she no relation or friend to whom you could apply? What wretches took her child away? Did she lodge with you?"

"Oh, sir! it is a sad tale, and one I don't know the rights of myself. The brute who took her child away was the first who brought her to me. Well do I remember her coming. It must be seventeen years ago come next March, surely. I had a husband then, sir, but he died in a fit a month after she had been at our little place—bad luck to her as well as me! for if he had lived he would not have left a stone unturned to have righted her. He suspected something wrong from the first, but I can't say I did, sir, for he who brought her—who turned out the base wretch he has—used to give me very handsome presents before her child was born, and behaved in a gentlemanlike way; and although I often went up and found her crying when he had been down from London to see her, I never thought but what it was from grief at talking of her lost husband, which in her situation seemed so hard to bear; for she ex-

pected to be confined very soon, when she first came—within a month, I think. Indeed, I remember taking the liberty of telling her it was wrong to open the wound afresh—to indulge in grief at such a time; but she only became more distant in her manner. She always seemed angry at any freedom; but one evening, about a week before her confinement, she rang her bell, and began telling me she had been greatly wronged, she felt sure; she seemed wound up like to tell me something; I thought it was about property, perhaps, or something of that sort. I remember she looked very pale; her eyes were very red, as if she had been crying a great deal. She had just told me to get her tea, and come and have a cup along with her, which I thought a great condescension, and ran down to put the kettle on, when there came the roll of wheels up to our little door (we kept a small farm, sir, down North); and when I opened it, there stood that dreadful man who called himself her brother *then*—the wicked, wicked monster! He said he had brought the nurse; and a great, fat, ill-

tempered woman got out of the fly, and he took her up stairs ; and I never went into that room again until after the poor baby's birth. I don't think I saw Milady's sweet face more than once, then I met her on the stairs ; and though that horrid woman was with her, and kept her eye fastened on her, she whispered to me, as I passed, 'Im so miserable !' Poor dear ! Oh ! had I only known then—but I think I must have been blind !”

“ What was the fellow's name ?—was he not her brother, then ? Have you reason to think the child was his ?”

“ I never could tell, sir, any more than I've told you, for she was taken with brain-fever a week after its birth ; and they said at the end of the fortnight the child must be taken away, for when she recovered a little she would nurse it, you see, sir ; and they were afraid for the baby, they said ; but they didn't seem to mind if they killed the mother, for after it was gone she was frantic—her screams were terrible to hear. Mr. Bruce (as he called himself) brought a fresh,

healthy-looking young woman to take the dear baby and nurse it, and he took her with the child back to London on the following day. The young woman came to fetch the baby and to take it to the inn about a mile from our farm on the day she came down with Mr. Bruce from London, and I asked a few questions about the lady, but she seemed to know but little, only that an uncle had undertaken to bring the child up. I had been paid regularly every week, sir, till then, and Mr. Bruce told me before he left that when the nurse left, which she did at the end of the month, she would settle with me, and that he should be down again the week following; but the nurse, when I asked her for the money, said she knew nothing about it—that she had been paid for her services, and left very soon after, telling me, in answer to my inquiry where Mr. Bruce lived, “that he might live in ‘furrin parts’ for what she knew; but I’ve reason to believe she knew a great deal more about all that had happened than she chose to show. I waited for Mr. Bruce

anxiously, for yonder, sir, I had lost my husband, and had to manage all for myself and the poor lady, but he never came; and from that time to this," continued the poor woman, "I have done my best for her."

"It is truly a melancholy tale," said Morley. "Did you say you knew he was not her brother? What is his real name, do you know?"

"I do know, sir, for I found it out; but I dare not tell it. He is no relation to her."

"Why are you afraid to tell the villain's name?"

"He has threatened me if I do, sir. I cannot—dare not," and she looked the fear she expressed.

"But why? You have right on your side. You might bring him to justice. Besides, it is very long since you saw him, is it not?"

"No, sir. I did not set eyes on him for years, until a week ago. We have been here two years now, sir. My husband's father, the old man you've been talking to,

lost his wife at that time, sir, and he took it so to heart, and wrote so wretched-like that he had no one near him but his two grandchildren—that little girl, sir, and her brother, who's got a place now up at the mill—that, although I was doing pretty well, considering, for my husband's cousin kept the farm on, and allowed me enough for my small way, if it had not been for the poor lady, still I could not leave the old man (who was the father to so good a man as my George), to lack for human kindness and attention ; which you know, sir, at his time of life is so necessary. So, when he wrote that he had enough for me and my poor charge, I left the farm for good, and made my way here. We have enough to eat, and, with industry, we manage pretty well. These cottages are Mr. Bertram's own, and now I am here, Bill, who is a good boy to his grandfather, can earn more by taking a good place out from home, instead of one only for a few hours each day, for he never left him of a night till I came ; and although you'll say, sir, I'm no protection in a place

which bears so ill a name as I know this does hereabouts, still you know I've little to fear, for we have nothing worth for thieves to take away. But I am wearying you, sir, with my affairs."

"No, you are not ; but I think my friend has finished, for I hear him moving. But you have not told me if you have seen this Mr. Bruce lately, which I imagine is the case by your words ?"

"Yes, sir, strange and unaccountable as it is, for however he found out we were here I cannot tell or imagine any way ; but the other evening, the first evening your friend came in here for a light for his cigar, just after he had left, and I had shut up, for it was growing late, there was a loud single knock which startled me, and when I opened the door, there, sure enough, he stood ! I could not believe my eyes at first ; it was unusual enough for anybody to come to our poor dwelling, and I was just thinking upon your friend's visit, and how he seemed struck with our poor lady, when that dreadful face

came like as if it rose from the dead !
Would that it were among them !”

“ You seem to have a great horror of this person, indeed ; and you will not tell me his name, then, or what he said ?” said Morley.

“ I dare not,” she answered, with a shudder ; “ he threatened my life if I mentioned him, or told any one of our poor lady, or let her off the beach, or even let her stray beyond a certain point.”

“ But this is absurd ; he cannot force these things upon you. Does he live here, did he say ? Did you ask him ?”

“ I did, sir ; for I said if he did, I would take my poor dear away, far away ; for I believe if she saw him, only for an instant, it would kill her ; it would bring back all, so cruelly, more than she could bear. But he said he did not live here ; nor would he interfere with her in any way so long as I obeyed him about the lady ; nor would he even come near us again ; but that if I disobliged him in one ‘ tittle ’ (that was the word), either in word or deed, he should

find all out, whatever it might be; he should be sure to know it, and I might look to myself and that poor creature for the consequences. I assure you, sir, I am telling you this in fear and trembling."

"But you've no occasion for fear, for I know nothing of the wretch, I assure you, and do not suppose I shall ever know him, or he me; if I did, it would be the worse for him, I can tell you. But did he give you any assistance?"

"No, sir. When I asked him how he could be so wicked, to leave me, a poor working woman, to keep that dear, sweet lady, and she in rags and tatters, and that lady 'his sister,' he said she was no sister of his, and as to keeping her, I had far better have let her starve long ago. I begged him to let me know if she had one friend who would help her, and he said, No! the only friend she had had, had been himself, and he would have stood by her if she had only behaved with common gratitude; but that all that was over, and he only wished he could hear of her death. I

then changed my way a little, sir, and declared I would threaten him, and expose him to the magistrates of this place. At this he laughed aloud, and said that was good, when I didn't even know his name. And at last, when he was going, he repeated with such a terrible oath what he had said about my secrecy, that he made me tremble all over !”

“ And you are afraid even to say how you found out his real name, then ?”

“ Yes, sir. I would rather say nothing more about him.”

“ Did you think to ask about the child ?”

“ Yes, sir ; he said it was well off, but that the uncle would never hear its mother named. So I knew there was no help to come from that quarter, even if it were possible to find him out. I suppose the poor dear acted wrong, and all her friends forsook her ! It is a sad, but common tale, I fear. But I forget I am talking to such a young gentleman,” added the good woman, again wiping her eyes.

“ Well, I am only down here for a little

time, on a visit; but if I cannot manage to come once more before I leave—I fear I shall not be able—I will get a young lady I know to come and see if you need any assistance for this poor lady. I am aware you have done without it,” he continued, seeing the woman look rather displeased, “and great praise is due to you. You have acted a true Christian’s part; but you will not object to another sharing, in a small degree, this duty. She is a lady, as you say, by birth, poor soul!—any stranger must see that; and will you kindly take this and buy her some new clothes?” So saying, Morley hastily put ten guineas into the hand of the astonished Mrs. Bertram, and hurried to join Ralph, who was waiting for him.

“Stay one minute, sir, if you please;” and Morley came back a step or two. “A thousand thanks, may God bless you; but you will not say a word of what I have told you, sir—not even to him?”

“To my friend? no, certainly not, if you do not wish it; but you will not mind my

telling the young lady just a little about Lady Vernon ; she would be so kind to her you cannot think."

"Excuse me, sir, but the fewer who come near here the better, I feel sure, and so would you, if you knew that dreadful man ; but if the young lady wishes to come, beg her to keep silence about what she may see. I cannot refuse you, sir, after your great kindness ; but that young gentleman with you, I am glad he has done coming."

"Why ? he knows nothing of what you have told me, I am quite sure ; and he is not one to wish to know, he is too taken up with his drawing ; but has he done coming ?"

"He was here Friday and Saturday, sir ; he said to-day would be the last time he should want to come, because it was only a 'little sketch' he called it."

"Here Friday and Saturday !" said Morley, remembering Ralph had told him 'he couldn't come till to-day,' Monday. "But what makes you glad he has done coming ?"

"Oh, nothing particular, sir ; only from a manner about that man the other night, I

couldn't help fancying he had been watching the young gentleman come in here — he didn't say anything like it—only he said such a deal about ' if I encouraged any one here,' that I felt sorry I had given your friend permission to come and paint our lady, that man looked so meaning. I took it into my head that he must know him, and be afraid of his own villany being known, or something ; but, perhaps, I get superstitious, sir, for I had an awful dream that night about them both."

" He worked upon your mind, I daresay, but I should not think it likely he will trouble you again. In the mean time, I should forget him, if possible, and certainly not turn away friends on his account."

" Ah! sir, you do not know him."

" No, I wish I did, for the poor lady's sake and your own ; but I must be going, my friend is getting impatient I hear."

" Oh, good gracious !" cried Mrs. Bertram, as a violent gust of wind blew the front door to with a bang.

" Why, what a fearful change !" exclaimed Morley, advancing and opening the door.

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Morley saw it distinctly, and after looking some time, could trace five figures in it.

"My old eyes are going," sighed Bertram, "but God help them! It's Dean's fishing smack; if the tempest comes I'm dreading they'll never reach the shore alive."

"Good God!" cried Morley, "can nothing be done?" but his voice was arrested by a deafening peal, and at the same instant the boat was lost to view. There was a breathless pause—the waters seemed in frenzy. "Oh, there she is again, thank God!" he exclaimed, as with straining eyes he gazed through the glass.

"It is shocking that no assistance can be given," said Ralph, speaking for the first time.

"It's a sea-whirl," muttered the old sailor; "the storm's beginning; she can't keep her hold—that's certain—long. No; there's only One Hand can help them now."

"Do you know any of the men? poor fellows! One looks but a youth," observed Ernest.

"Ay, ay, I know one or two, I think,

passing well ; but that young one must be the son of the woman there, who keeps the 'Gull' yonder on the cliff. Mayhap your honours don't know it ; it's a poor place ; he's a bad un, I fear ; it'll be awful to die in his badness ; and I'm afraid, from what I've heard, it'll break his mother's heart. Well, I'd advise your honours to make the best of your way on, it won't be long before we get it in earnest ; I'm sorry I've no umbrella, but we sha'n't have drops just yet." With these words old Bertram bowed and was about to enter the cottage, but Morley held out his hand, which the old man grasped warmly, and said, "God bless you, sir ; it's a treat to meet with such as you ; a noble gentleman, who does not think it a crime to shake hands with his humbler fellow-man."

And so the young men left the shore by the steep road up from Black Rock, and walked quickly along the cliff. They seemed to have changed places, for Ralph was the chief speaker. Now, Morley appeared lost in thought ; the former even

made an effort to converse on topics he imagined would be congenial to his companion—spoke of Nature as “having listened to their previous conversation and wishing now to prove her power;” but Morley was preoccupied—he answered at random, and ever and anon looked wistfully round at that small speck upon the ocean—that fragile bark with its precious cargo of immortal souls!

There was no rain as yet, and the sea raged and swelled fearfully. “Perhaps if there were rain,” said Ralph, as Morley turned again with a deep sigh, “it would be less dangerous.”

Morley shook his head.

“There certainly seems little hope in those boiling waters.” Ralph continued, “Poor devils! I shouldn’t like to be in their shoes.”

“For those who have old Bertram’s faith,” said Morley, solemnly, “there can be but little to fear; they have only to nerve themselves for the passing trying hour—transient as this storm; but for those who have it not, may God have mercy on them now!”

A long silence ensued. Whether there was something in Morley's words, spoken so fervently, in the slight tremor of his voice, almost inaudible; or whether the awful grandeur of that most impressive scene, together with the knowledge of human woe unutterable; or it may be that all combined had touched the artist's heart; but somehow it came to pass, that he, the cold student, wrapt in his own moody atmosphere of reserve and apathetic indifference, linked his arm within that of Ernest Morley, and the two proceeded at a rapid pace—for the large heavy drops had commenced falling slowly, but with a constant, steady warning of an approaching overflow and threatening torrent.

They had not spoken when they arrived at the bottom of the hill where their paths divided, but then Morley placed his hand on Ralph's shoulder and said, abruptly, "Ralph, I am going, if all is well, to Paris, for a week or two, very shortly; I want a companion, will you go with me?"

The artist's eyes were lit up with sudden

animation; it was what he had longed for, for years, to see the glorious paintings of the Louvre—oh! it was too much to hope for. His countenance fell as he replied,—

“You forget I am not my own master yet; it is fruitless to ask Dr. Thornton, my uncle; he never yet advanced a farthing for my enjoyment, and he never will.”

“When I ask you to accompany me, I mean as a ‘friend,’” broke in Morley, divining the other’s thoughts, “I merely ask for your companionship, and shall consider it a boon.”

“I could not bear to be under an obligation to anybody,” answered the youth, proudly.

“Well, well, only say you’ll go. I’ll undertake to settle the old Doctor. I think a change of scene and circumstances will do you good.”

Ralph, softened under the kindly speech and manner, said, “If any one could melt that old compound of pounds, shillings, and pence, I believe you could.”

Thus did he agree to a proposal which was made, in fact, solely on his account, and for his welfare. Morley had not thought of going to Paris before.

CHAPTER VI.

"Oft will fond smile of welcome the glittering tear
impart—

The silent bond of sympathy—the echo of the heart!"

"'Tis marvellous . . .

The mystery of this opening flower!

The Marvel of Peru?

. Nay, yon poor Lily!"

"THANK goodness, this journey is nearly
at an end, for I feel fairly done over!"

The words were spoken aloud, for the coach had no other occupant than the fair speaker. She looked tired, fairly tired out; and considering it was now nearly seven o'clock in the evening, and she had travelled since three that morning at dawn, her fatigue is not to be wondered at, by those of the female sex especially, who, not over strongly constituted, have realized that jaded

feeling after long travelling: we appeal to them for sympathy. Rose had not waited for a fly when she reached the M—— station. The coach being ready to start, and not overloaded with passengers, she had taken her seat therein, after being promised by the guard that it should take her up the hill and set her down at her uncle's door. The dessert was still upon the table at Sea View, but Mrs. Thornton was the only one who had kept her seat. She sat with her head resting on her hand, and with the other playing listlessly with her dessert-fork. She seemed deeply in thought, and only raised her head once or twice when the thin, fragile-looking girl, lying on a couch by the window, coughed more violently than usual. The dining-room was a long, pleasant, cosy-looking room, with folding doors and a window at each end; one commanding a view of the winding road up the hill, with the front shrubbery and broad carriage-drive, and the other, opening on to the lawn at the back, displaying the pretty pleasure-grounds and the two paddocks beyond, and farther on through the trees,

down the sloping road, were glimpses of the blue ocean. The view of the sea from the drawing-room above was bold and good, there being a large window on the eastern side, besides those at either end, but it made the room more exposed in every way to the changes of temperature ; and this evening, as Eve and Mrs. Thornton were alone (the Doctor having gone off directly after dinner in his brougham to his patient and friend, Mr. Greenhill, with whom he intended taking tea and playing a game of backgammon), the latter thought it advisable for them to remain where they were—the wind having risen so high, and there being symptoms of an approaching storm. James had received orders accordingly to bring tea there at the turn of the half-hour, the usual time.

“Are you sure there’s no draught from that window, my love ; you’ve pushed the couch so very close to it,” and Mrs. Thornton rose from the table and poured out some mixture in a wine-glass, which she brought to Eve. “Your cough seems worse to-night.”

"It's only a little hacking," she answered, when she gained breath to speak. "I'm so anxious about Ralph; he has gone along the shore, I think, with Mr. Morley—they'll be caught, don't you think they will, aunty? Oh! hark at the thunder."

"My love, you must come farther from the window; suppose we have lightning, which we are sure to have soon."

"But then I can't see the road, and I must watch really, dear aunty."

"There—you can see everything coming up the road from here," moving the sofa a little distance back, and pulling the curtain so as to shade the gentle loving face.

"I wish I could see him coming."

"Oh! never mind him, love; young men always know how to take care of themselves; I daresay he has gone home to Mr. Greenhill's with young Morley."

"I don't think he would go there to-night."

There was a pause.

"Did he know your uncle was going there this evening?" asked Mrs. Thornton, abruptly.

"Yes; I think so," and Eve sighed. "See, see! aunty," at length she exclaimed, "the coach is coming up the hill—look!"

Mrs. Thornton did look.

"Well, my dear, I don't see anything to make you so excited in that; pray lie down, Eve, you will be ill."

"But it never comes up the hill—scarcely ever. Oh! I'm sure something is the matter, and they are bringing him home."

"My dear Eve, you make me quite angry; in the first place, I don't think he would come home that way at all—he would come up the back way if he comes straight from the shore—whatever makes you so alarmed to-night, and so nervous? You must take a composing draught, and go to bed very soon after tea."

"There *now* look, aunt," said Eve, suddenly growing very calm and very pale, "it is coming up the drive."

"And well it may," said Mrs. Thornton, kissing her hand, and looking the joy she felt.

Eve had bounded from the sofa, and in

spite of her aunt's "Pray keep quiet, love," she was in the hall, and the next moment locked in Rose Lindsay's arms.

It was a blessed moment, as it ever was when those two fond, warm young hearts met. Eve's face was like an April day, smiles and tears were struggling; but she was very weak, and had to be supported back to her couch, where for some moments she lay all but fainting.

It was Rose's turn to break down now. She had felt, as we have said, very tired and knocked up; but the sight of that fair young flower, withering so gradually and yet so surely—for the change which had taken place in the short time of their separation (only a few months) was very great—it made her forget all her fatigue—everything—in the one absorbing feeling, that that bright being, the playmate, the kindred spirit, of her childhood, and the friend of riper years, would bear communion with her but a short time upon earth—ay, but a short time longer! She was fading, fast fading, away! But Rose tried hard to cheer up,

and even forced a laugh—not her own merry one—when her aunt, after telling her how good she was to come so soon, declared she must be ravenous, and ordered a chop to be cooked directly, and James to bring the tray with the tea, and a glass of sherry to be drank off immediately, and sundry other little kindnesses and attentions, such as Aunt Eve, sitting up on the sofa, declared she was better, and could not go to bed yet. Now dear Rosey was come she had so much to tell and to hear; so she was humoured for a little time, while the faint blush and the bright light in the eye lasted; but they soon waned, and she sank back exhausted, as she always did after any excitement.

Mrs. Thornton and Rose covered her up carefully, and bade her try and dose, and then they adjourned to the other end of the room; and while the young traveller partook of the welcome refreshment they discoursed in a low tone, their voices falling a soothing murmur in the ears of the invalid who soon fell into a placid sleep.

"And so you don't think her really materially worse?" said Rose, glancing stealthily towards the sofa.

"Well, you know, love, I go by what the Doctor says a great deal. I certainly am surprised sometimes that he holds out the hopes he does. He still maintains that she may yet outgrow the malady. He says she is very young, and perfect quiet and ease of mind may do much. One lung, he says, is perfectly sound; but," continued Mrs. Thornton, sorrowfully, "I cannot in my heart nourish the hopes he speaks of. I think she grows weaker, and, I am certain, does not feel at all times that quiet ease of mind he thinks for. For instance, I am quite sure the constant unhappy misunderstanding between Ralph and the Doctor greatly disturbs her tranquillity."

"It always did," said Rose. "What a pity it is they will not both change a little, and give in to one another."

"The Doctor, my dear, is too far advanced in life to change much, I fear," returned her aunt, smiling rather sadly.

“And that horrible man—you say he has been here often lately?”

“What, Mr. Blight? Oh, yes, indeed he has; and much as I dislike him, I can hardly help smiling sometimes when I look at him, for I always think of that day when you set him down in your wicked way, Rosey—you’re a sad girl—and told him he was ‘*Blight*’ byname and ‘*blight*’ by nature.”

“But what has he been here so often about, aunt?” asked Rose, laughing at Mrs. Thornton’s solemn shake of the head.

“Oh, he has had a good bit of trouble, it seems, with those tenants in that bad part leading to Gin Way. Your uncle wished to get rid of that property; I don’t think he much liked it from the first, but it was Blight’s investment, so of course he had nothing to say against it; and since the purchase there seems to have been nothing but trouble arising from it. They appear from all accounts such a terrible lot; but all and everything is left to his will and judgment. The Doctor would be very angry if he heard me say so, I dare say, but I cannot imagine

how he can place so much confidence in that man ; for I don't think he places much in anybody else."

"No. How he has got hold of Uncle Thornton in the way he has, has always been a riddle to me—the sneaking-faced creature !"

"Really, Rosey, I think you instil your dislike of him into me. I never noticed anything sly about him till you pointed it out the last time you were here. I always used to think he gave his opinion to the Doctor more openly than anybody else ; and yet, as you say, he never contradicts him by chance."

"Oh, he does give his opinion, and he maintains it, too—the beast ! I beg your pardon, aunt, but I never can help calling him names ; he knows I hate him. He can wind that tiresome old Doctor round with his little finger. I beg your pardon, aunty, again ; but he is tiresome sometimes, you know."

"I know, dear Rose, one thing, and that is that you should not hate anybody, as that

sweet angel would tell you ; though really I have a dislike to Mr. Blight myself, and cannot deny that he possesses a strange power over your uncle."

"Have you ever heard him dare to insinuate anything again about—you know what I mean?" asked Rose, with a heightened colour and flashing eye.

"He has never alluded to the subject again to me, for as you say, I don't think he dares to ; I showed my horror so plainly. But poor Eve was lying as she might be now, one day after dinner, for she looked so tired the Doctor made her lie down. I had gone upstairs for something, and I suppose they thought she was asleep. They were sitting here together over their wine ; and she told me, after dicussing something for a long time in a low tone, the Doctor said, 'Mr. Blight, I believe you—you are rather old for her ; but I think, as you say, you would take the more care of her.' Here Blight said something she could not hear ; and the Doctor, who cannot subdue his voice so well, replied, 'I do believe that, too ; for I have

known instances in the profession where worse cases have been cured by early matrimony; and I shouldn't wonder if hers was, and she lived to be quite a strong woman."

Rose shivered and shook her head. "How could—oh, how could he!" was all she said.

"Ah! when the poor child crept up to my room, and put her arms round my neck, and told me what she had heard, I think, though I didn't say those words of yours I thought them. After a little while, and Blight had taken his departure, and gone back to London, I said to the Doctor one night, 'I think that Mr. Blight is very attentive to Eve; but I suppose it is natural he should feel affection for her, having known her from a baby.' 'I don't see why he should not be attentive to her, or show her affection if he chooses,' he replied, rather angrily. So I thought I had better not say any more. After a little while he added, 'She might get some younger, and many worse; and if I can't book Ernest Morley for her, I'd rather Blight have her than anybody.' 'But I don't

think she likes Mr. Blight,' I ventured to say, a little time after. 'Like him! What the devil does that matter? She'd like him fast enough when she married him; a young thing like that would like anybody that was kind to her.' He did not speak again for some time, and I could not find words to answer him."

"I should think not," said Rose, whose cheek had turned very white.

"Presently he said, as if to himself," continued Aunt Rachel, "'I'm sure if she likes any one she ought to like Blight.' I wondered why."

"And well you might wonder," exclaimed Rose; "he thinks because he is deceived in the fellow, everybody else must be."

"Well, he found I didn't say anything, and he went back to Ernest Morley again, and began praising him. Do have another glass of wine, dear Rose, you look so done up."

"Oh! it is nothing; I am tired; but I want to hear all about that creature and poor darling Eve."

"That creature? Do you mean Ernest Morley?" asked Mrs. Thornton, playfully tapping Rose's shoulder. "O Rosey! he does not think much about Eve, except to pity her, *you* know that."

"I was not alluding to Mr. Morley," was the cold answer; "you know, Aunt Rachel, I meant that horrid Blight."

"I fear you and Mr. Morley have had a tiff, as they say."

"My dear aunt, how can we have had a tiff when we have been so many miles apart?"

"Now, don't be angry, Rosey, dear; only why do you speak so coolly about him? I thought you were such good friends."

"So we are, dear aunt, and so I hope we shall always be; but you must not speak in that joking way about him and me—Mr. Morley is engaged to Lady Emily de Vere."

Rose's colour went and came, and her voice was broken and low. Mrs. Thornton gave one little start of surprise, and looked incredulous, but she deemed it best to change the subject, so she went off to Blight again, and told how, in years past, during all

her dear child's lifetime, in fact (she always called Eve her dear child), he had been so constantly down to Doverton—once every quarter, to see how she was going on, and how even then Eve could never like him, though it was not in her nature to dislike anybody."

"I suppose Uncle Thornton sent him."

"Yes, I believe so, always; I think it was an agreement that he should come—because, although the Doctor had this house from the time dear Eve was three years old, he travelled about a great deal for some time. Blight used to buy her sweets and dolls, but yet, as I have often told you, she never took to him, but always seemed afraid of him, and we used to reason with her about it; but there must be something peculiar in him, by so many having such an aversion to him."

"You said, dear aunty, that you had noticed what I spoke of, about his being sly, and watching uncle so. Have you noticed how dreadful he looks when his cunning eyes fall on Ralph?"

"I don't think I ever did till the last time.

but one that he was here, three weeks ago, I suppose. When he came in, it was in the morning, and we were up in the drawing-room, and the Doctor was out, and he came up unannounced, as he generally takes the liberty of doing. James tells me he sends him down stairs, and says he prefers coming up by himself."

"Well, I'm sure!" put in Rose.

"Eve was winding a skein of silk, and Ralph was holding it for her, very unusually making himself useful; his study was having a regular clean-out—to that circumstance, I suppose, we were indebted for his company. Eve had just told him 'he was doing good for once, for he was helping others,' and laughing more gaily than I had heard her for some time, and he was looking at her, in that way he does at times—I cannot describe it."

"I know how you mean—as if she was a goddess—different from anybody else, which I believe he considers her. Poor Ralph!"

"Yes, just in that way. When that Blight walked in, I noticed she changed

colour, but Ralph did not move his eyes from her face—they seemed riveted ; and I shall never forget the look that man gave him ; it really startled me, and gave me quite a chill ! I could hardly speak to him when he said, ‘How do you do ?’ ”

“ Did Ralph notice his look at all, do you think ? ”

“ I don’t think he did ; but there is no love lost between them, I fear—Why, Ralph ! how did you come in ? I didn’t hear you,” added Aunt Rachel, as the opening door admitted that young gentleman. “ See, Rose has come ! ”

“ Ah ! how do you do, Rose ? ” said Ralph, shaking Miss Lindsay’s hand with more warmth, she thought, than usual. “ Did you escape this dreadful storm ? ”

“ Storm ! ” echoed Eve, rising from the sofa. “ I was sure we should have one. Were you caught in it, Ralph ? ”

“ My dear child,” said Mrs. Thornton, “ I thought you were asleep.”

“ So I have been, aunty, till you woke me, when Ralph came in.”

"Why you seem quite dry, Ralph; I thought I heard it pouring," remarked Rose.

"I'm dry now," answered Ralph, without looking up from his tea, which he was sipping. "You may well know nothing of the storm, shut in so comfortably here. It is fearful somewhere. We've had it pretty sharp hereabouts."

"Well, I feared it was coming on," observed Mrs. Thornton, "and I desired James to shut us up accordingly. I heard a terrible clap of thunder just as Rosey came in. I wish your uncle was safe at home out of it."

"It is passing over now, ma'am; but the rain is coming down like a flood."

"Well, you've not told us yet how you escaped what, I suppose, you call a *ducking*," asked Rose.

"I did not escape it that I know of, considering I was wet through—drenched to the skin."

"I suppose Rose thought as I did, that Mr. Morley sent you home safe in Mr. Greenhill's carriage," remarked Aunt Thornton.

"I have not been near Mr. Greenhill's; I came up straight from the shore, and over the south paddock, and had to change everything."

"Oh, you came in the backway, as I thought you would. Why, what a long walk you must have taken! Eve got quite frightened about you when the storm was coming on."

"Did she?" and for the first time the young man raised his eyes to glance at the pale face resting on Rose's shoulder. The two young girls were conversing on different events that had taken place since their parting, and they neither of them observed the scrutiny with which he gazed. He desisted for a moment, just to spread a piece of toast, and then his eyes wandered that way again. Evidently for him, there was something more than usually attractive in those wan, chiselled features to-night.

Mrs. Thornton, as she handed him another cup of tea, detected the searching look; she had often marked his eye fixed on Eve with that same earnestness—to her notion, myste-

rious expression—before, but never with the same ardour—the same intensity as now.

“She looks ill this evening, doesn’t she?” she whispered to Ralph, imagining she had hit on the subject of his meditations.

“Very,” answered he, abstractedly.

Shall we take the liberty of our order, and probe the artist’s brain? Unconsciously he was trying to join the links of a parted chain—a chain, alas! long broken—to attach a thread the past had severed, too rudely snapped asunder! Could he trace a resemblance in that delicate profile?—in those eyes which plainly told their “light” was not of earth? Could he, in their intellectual gleaming, yet draw comparison with those whose beam of “*such light*” was extinguished in this world for ever? Could he, in that pure face before him, drink, as from a fountain, draughts of a feeling undefined—holy, calm, pure rays of a glory such as this life could never give—reflections of a spirit whose brightness was celestial, whose day-dream was at rest, its working well-nigh finished! crowned with the promised peace—with the

heaven-born star of Immortality ? Could he yet find in such a one companionship with "*her*" whose sun had set in darkness !—whose rays of light and reason had been quenched for evermore ? Yes, in his dim, obstructed vision for ever—evermore ! Ralph ! Ralph Thornton, of the world so worldly !—yet has he discovered a clue ; and yet does he ponder in awestruck wonder now !

"How dreadful it must be for those poor creatures out at sea ! Oh ! how fearfully the wind blows !" said Eve, her eyes looking brighter—moist with their brightness. Nobody spoke. Rose shuddered. *One* thought of a little skiff upon the roaring, angry ocean—a tiny craft, with its weight of immortal souls ! "where were they now ?" . . .

"What a devil of a night ! Halloa, young Rose ! What ! have you come, with your saucy face, and your tongue of impudence ?"

"Yes, Uncle Thornton, I'm here, as you see ; so I hope you mean to behave yourself."

"Well, how did you leave mamma ?"

"I've not seen her ; but I hear she is quite well."

"What! scampered over the country all in one day? Well, you know how to do it, you young rosebuds. I say, wife, it's confoundedly chilly; are you too stingy to let us have a bit of fire?"

"Why, we've all been complaining of the heat; but we'll have one directly."

"You've been hot enough boxed in here."

"But you came home in the carriage, uncle, didn't you?"

"Yes, Miss Rose, I came home in the carriage; but I was sent for while at Greenhill's, and, being a short distance to the place, I walked there, and, going back to Greenhill's, I got a bit of a soaking. Young Morley came in regularly ducked. I'm afraid he'll take cold. I ordered him a stiff glass of brandy-and-water, and to bed; and told him he must expect these adventures if he would go roaming over the country with that poor star-gazing nephew of mine. But, by Jove! *he* doesn't seem much the worse for it; has he tucked into all that haddock?"

The subject of the observation pushed his plate from him with rather too much im-

petuosity, for it clashed and rang against another.

"Have I shocked your modesty?—eh? ha! ha! ha!"

"Why didn't Mr. Morley change his clothes directly, as Ralph did, dear uncle?" asked Eve.

"Because he wasn't only thinking of his own carcase, I suppose. No; he made me bawl out at him, for he would take off his wet coat, and stop there in his shirt-sleeves to help poor Greenhill into bed. I saw him shaking all over."

"Oh, dear! I'm afraid he's taken a bad cold," observed Mrs. Thornton.

"He must, if uncle ordered him brandy-and-water," said Rose, with a trembling voice and a forced laugh.

"What do you mean, you hussy? There are times when it is imperatively necessary, and better than any medicine one can give."

"I think you said, one day when Eve had been fainting, and aunt gave her some, that you would never have a drop of it in your house again."

"I daresay I did, when a lot of fools—women (I beg their pardon) are for taking it at every turn."

"Eve required it."

"Well, let her swizzle it then. James! get my slippers."

"I hope you have not taken cold, Dr. Thornton," remarked his lady, stirring the fire. "I think you had better have had the carriage to take you where you were sent for."

"Oh, it was only to old Mother Buchum's—that girl's queer—I don't like the look of her to-night."

"What, poor Nina?" asked Eve. "Ah! Joan told me she grew paler and thinner every day. I fear her heart is breaking."

"Breaking—her heart breaking! her constitution breaking more likely. I think that old fool talks precious twaddle to you. Women's hearts are made of too hard a stuff to break," said the Doctor, contemptuously.

"Is that the young dressmaker," asked Rose, "you told me about, dear Eve, in your last letter?"

"Yes," was the whispered answer.

"Hasn't the wretch written to her, or been to see her, or anything?"

"The young man has done all, and more than society requires of him," observed the Doctor, impatiently. "He has allowed her liberally enough. What does she want, or, rather, what does she expect more?"

"The young man may, and most likely did, give her reason to want and expect much more. Money cannot restore her character, or wash out the stain from her name," said Rose, emphatically.

"Very pretty, very high-wrought indeed, young lady. You must know a little more of the world before you venture upon opinion, I fancy."

"Very likely, uncle; but its baseness will only strengthen my opinion."

"Oh, you've been reading a lot of novels and trash, eh? Well, we won't quarrel the first night you come."

"What does Eve say?" asked Mrs. Thornton. "Go to bed, dear child, you're tired."

"She was giving me a little quiet information," answered Rose, smiling, "which sounded very much like truth—that uncle and I never did anything else but quarrel when we are together."

"Well, it is true, you baggage! and it must be all your fault; I don't quarrel with any one else."

"No; because nobody else contradicts you; while you have it all your own way you get along 'like one o'clock.' But you really have not given us an account of your '*doings and goings*' to-day. What a wonder!"

"I'll give you an account presently you'll remember! You get a more saucy jade each time you come. I shall write to that old dolt of an uncle of yours; he ruins you."

"I'll not have his name trifled with," said Rose, with *hauteur*, very different to her former manner. "I don't know what you mean by '*dolt*,' but I know that he is worth a dozen of many other people who think themselves very wise."

"Oh, yes! my dear, I dare say you do; he can swizzle if you like, and he can

gammon you finely. How are all his birds, and his menagerie?"

"They are quite well, thank you, and so, Irejoice to say, is he; and, if by *gammoning* you mean that he makes those people around him comfortable and happy, why then he does indeed gammon in no common way."

There was a hasty answer on the Doctor's lip, which Mrs. Thornton perceived, and to stop its advent she again requested Eve to retire, who slowly rose from the couch, and bidding good night, resigned herself to the care and attendance of the faithful old Joan, who had been summoned to her darling charge.

"I think you good people should both put your feet in hot water to-night," said Mrs. Thornton, glancing from the Doctor to Ralph, who sat apart, and had since his uncle's entry been turning the leaves of a book abstractedly, and without once tracing the meaning of the page before him.

"How you women do fuss! give me a glass of cold water, I'm all right. What's a little rain?" demanded the Doctor.

"Ralph looked very pale when he came in," said Rose.

"Why, good God! I should think he'd eaten enough to keep out all cold; his star-gazing doesn't stop his appetite!"

"I don't think he's eaten much, considering he dined so early," Mrs. Thornton said, simply.

"Well, haven't you anything to tell us? Did the sea look very fine? the stars, and the clouds, and all the rest of it?"

"There were no stars, sir; the clouds were as black as night, and the seas terrible to hear and to look upon."

"Awful for those on it!" responded Rose. "Did you see any vessels after the storm began, Ralph?"

"Only one small craft, with four or five men in it."

"Did they get to the shore, or were they far off?"

"Far away: we were told it was next to impossible they could reach it."

"Shocking!—dreadful!" uttered Rose, her eyes brimming.

"Precious asses to go out when a storm was pending !" exclaimed the Doctor.

"Oh ! but it was lovely, uncle, a little while before it burst over us. As the train passed Battle Way all was as calm and beautiful as could be, and at sea these changes are more sudden still, I've heard."

"I thought a blue coat could always tell when water was coming," said her uncle.

"The men were fishermen, and they had been out since morning," said Ralph, abruptly.

"Oh, Ralph ! you do look so white again. I'm sure a little of the beverage uncle despises will do you good. Now, come, uncle, confess that you think so too."

"I see nothing particular in him, except that he looks rather more moon-struck than usual."

This was said with a jocular laugh, meant for bantering, but the sound grated upon the artist's ear. Where was the lost link of the chain—the shapeless ideality—the depths of a dawning compassion just stirred and flickering in his breast, for the woes of his

fellow-kind? Visions—phantasies—alike dispelled! scared by the too rough touch—the jarring tone of the tuneless chord! He lit a chamber-candle, and hastily quitted the room.

“What a devil of a temper that fellow is in,” remarked the Doctor, his countenance waxing wroth.

“I don’t think he quite understands you,” said Rose, musingly.

“I should like to know who on God’s earth understands him or his absurdities! Here, only the last time Blight was here I got him to bring me down the very latest and best medical works of the day. I don’t believe the young scapegrace has so much as cut the leaves of one of them.”

And then followed a long catalogue of complaints upon the Doctor’s side, and efforts of mediation from Miss Lindsay, the latter aided occasionally by a little consolatory remark or amicable word from Aunt Rachel, until that good lady was fairly overcome, and finally stopped in her participation of the argument (which had been very small,

for the Doctor; as usual, had the chief share to himself), by unintentionally and very innocently provoking his ire, by what he termed one of her fool's speeches; so poor Aunt Rachel sat silent, afraid to speak again, and sometimes trembling lest her very hot-headed husband, with his hot words, should wound her niece; but she knew of old that Rose could take her own part; and though, when the conference was ended, and that young lady had withdrawn, he designated her as a forward minx, with something like an oath, she also knew that in his heart he considered her a girl of strong sense and powerful understanding.

On the topmost floor of Sea View House, which comprised four storeys, was a small room with a skylight, originally used to hold lumber, until Ralph Thornton had petitioned it for his own dormitory, much to Mrs. Thornton's astonishment and the Doctor's amusement. It was accordingly emptied of its motley store—boxes, birdcages, old chairs, worn-out curtains, flawed china, &c.—and a bedstead placed in it (not the occupant's

former one, for there was not space sufficient for it), an iron bedstead, narrow and mean-looking, after his own desire, with no bed, but a very hard mattress and no drapery whatever; a small wash-stand, fitting in one corner; a diminutive chest of drawers, which looked as though they had been fashioned in the year one; a chair, and a small piece of carpet at the side of the bed. Add to this a sponge-bath kept propped up against the wall in the day-time, and the furniture is complete, at least the furniture in ordinary for a bed-room. But it had other belongings of a stranger kind, which we must not omit to describe. There was a broad shelf extending all round the walls of the small square apartment, about two feet from the skylight. This had formerly been the receptacle of stray stair-rods, old cornices, and other articles of the faded kind whose days of ornament or utility were over. It was now stocked with ware of a very different order; and in the pale moonlight, at the time we peep upon it, it looks ghastly, and perhaps inexplicable. The storm has sub-

sided for some hours past. The owner of the chamber is stretched upon his back on his chosen lowly pallet; his arms lie crossed upon his breast—it is his favourite position, and he has accustomed himself to fall asleep in it, and usually wakes in the same. There is a heavenly calm above, after the battle of the elements. The stars are innumerable, and the moon sheds her placid lustre upon the pale face of the student. He lies with his eyes fixed upon it—alas! would that its soothing balm could penetrate his soul—could ease his disturbed, his chafed and morbid spirit. But it has had one bright influence. It has diverted his gloomy musings—his dark reverie—and drawn his high genius into the fire of his contemplating eye. Around him on the shelf described are skulls—the ancient tenements of past greatness, of high ambition, noble purposes, honour, truth, zeal, and blighted hopes, by-gone faith, wrecked love, and merciless despair! On one before him the golden ray falls in mellow light, over the arch, beneath which once shone a window,

resplendent with the golden fire of his own, whose glowing beam is quenched for ever ! 'Tis food, verily, for reflection !—for other than thine, Ralph Thornton ! 'Tis a grand subject for the brush in truth, but it has a motto grander and holier far !

CHAPTER VII.

“Star of hope ! for me recalling
Dreams of bliss. Heart’s minstrelsy—
Sorrow’s shade hath scared in falling,
Heaven-born spell of memory !”

“Look into his eye ; it is coined in cunning !
Trust him not. Despise him and his counsel.
. . . Henceforth I will interchange no opinion.”

THE best or chief spare bedroom of Sea View House was fitted up with great taste. There had been a fire in the grate that day, in deference to good Mrs. Thornton’s established rule, once a week, when void of an occupant, that it neither “should nor could get damp.” The embers were still burning, and Rose, who felt chilly after her long journey, had ordered a few sticks and coals, to kindle them into a more genial glow.

She dismissed her aunt's maid who lingered to attend upon her, and drawing a well-stuffed, easy-looking arm-chair in front of the crackling wood, sat down with her little slippered feet upon the fender to enjoy what she inwardly termed, "a good long thinking-spell."

Her hair, loosened from restraint, fell waving round her, and her slender form, enveloped in the ample folds of a white dressing-gown, looked very easy and comfortable; but there was a disturbed expression in the lines of her intelligent face, and a slight contraction of the brow, which did away with the picture of repose. Her thoughts ran thus: "I'm afraid he has taken cold; how foolish not to go and change his things directly! Uncle may well say he does not only think of himself. He never does, when there is any one else to care for. How strange to go for a long walk with Ralph. Not in *him*; he would be pleasant and walk with anybody; but how odd Ralph should join in companionship with any other soul! except it might be her. Ah! poor dear!

I am sure she is thinner and looks more woe-like; the mystery that has always hung over her seems deepened as she grows worse. Mamma may laugh, and say she does not see such mystery, but I do and always have, and I am not the only one. I wonder if he will come here to-morrow. I daresay he will • if he has not taken a severe cold—he's very fond of Aunt Rachel. I dare say he comes every day. How shall I meet him? and I wonder how he'll meet me! Poor fellow! I'm sure he'll never be happy with that Lady Emily; she's not half good enough for him!" And she hid her face in her hands, blushing at the implication—the partial unuttered thought of "who could make him happy," of "who was good enough for him."

"Ah! no," she said, aloud, "not good enough; but how good one might become with him. Come in;" she added. "Ah! Joan; I thought it was you — talking to myself you see, for want of better company," she added, with a still deeper dye upon her cheek.

"I did not hear what you said, dear Miss Lindsay, never fear; my eyes are pretty quick, as you know, but my head's busy to-night, and I was thinking too much to hear anything that didn't concern me."

"Are you come to see after me as usual?" asked Rose, as Joan stirred the fire, and then began brushing the long, shining tresses, preparatory to putting them up for the night.

We have said before, that Joan, from long faithful service, had been a privileged person in the Doctor's household; and she had, also, from good, sterling qualities, caused herself to become a prodigious favourite. She had her peculiarities. Born in a higher position than the one into which she had from necessity fallen, her self-esteem was sometimes perhaps too apparent for her situation; at least it would have appeared so to a stranger's eye; her tenacity of all due respect from other members of the establishment, not only beneath, but above her, was sometimes even ludicrous. Not everybody

marrying late in life, as Mrs. Thornton had, would have continued in "good fellowship" with her husband's rather testy house-keeper. But that good lady made every generous allowance for the old woman's eccentricities. She had acted, as far as in her power lay, a mother's part to the pale, reserved orphan-boy, lying in his chosen, lonely garret. She had lived on, enduring year after year, what the Doctor called his "blowing up," without complaining, chiefly for that orphan's sake, whom she loved, in spite of his chilling ways ; and she had got so used at last to being "rowed" (as she once told Rose in confidence), "that she hardly heard the abuse levelled at her at times, but let it go in at one ear and out at the other ;" and somehow she had got attached to her abuser. She had found out the smooth channel of tenderness in the too rough-seeming heart—the hidden spring whose waters may have run deeply. Perhaps poor Mrs. Thornton had a fellow-feeling in this, as in other matters, with old Joan Austin. She, too, had nursed and tended an orphan child. She, too, had

watched over her charge with a never-changing care. But in her case the care had been mostly needed in the bodily health; the pure spirit had sought, with its own free will, the healing waters. Not so in the other. While the bodily health had been firm, the spirit had lacked the will and the guidance.

The former, old Joan had tended with a jealous eye, even up to the present hour, in preparing dry clothes and a warm bed after the stormy walk; but the latter had been left to wander in the desert, alone and unassisted, till it had become parched and well-nigh withered. Joan, though morally good, had not the wisdom to "minister to a mind diseased,"—the ability to lead the roving heart, aching and worn, to the cooling, ever-flowing fountain.

"And what are you so busy thinking about, Joany?" asked Rose, with whom the strange-mannered old lady had become, not only a favourite, but a kind of humble friend. Miss Lindsay had only known her since her aunt's marriage, though she had frequently seen her before, for Joan had

been once regularly every quarter to see Miss Ending, during those years the Doctor had been absent from Doverton ; and Rose, in her childhood, had frequently been staying at her Grandmamma Blue's during these visits. She had always liked the old woman ; although her Aunt Maria (Miss Blue), considered her "abominably free ;" and her grandmamma thought "she might keep her opinions a little more to herself" she could not help admiring the dauntless way in which old Joan would still give them regarding Miss Ending, "that she was sure liberty and more running about in the sea breezes would be better than moping here so long over books ; that she did not hold with those tight stays—the dear child's figure was perfect without that confinement to her limbs," and many more of the same nature. Although Miss Blue turned up her eyes when the old woman was gone, till only the whites were visible, and asked, generally, "Where was consistency in the world, if servants were to presume thus ?" Rose could see very plainly that her

darling Aunt Rachel felt, or rather agreed with, the inconsistency in question; as in truth did she. Eve was a fragile, delicate flower, and always had a look which said, "fading away!" "Why torment her with learning so?"—"why keep her so long over her French, when she may never live to speak it?"—were questions Rose Lindsay longed to ask of her indefatigable Aunt Maria, that paragon of consistency!

"What was I thinking of, deary?" repeated Joan.

"Oh, only old subjects! You see I have lain my poor 'Lily' down, so now I come to see what I can do for my sprightly 'Rose!'"

"Don't you think your 'Lily' looks very ill?"

"No; not so bad as she did a week ago. Ill, of course, she looks; she will never look better here, poor lamb; but I don't think she is worse."

"Not from that blood which came from the lungs?"

"She looked dreadful then, poor darling,

I know ; but I fancy these last two days she has been more herself again."

"But it shows dreadful symptoms," observed Rose, sadly.

"Not worse than we've had before ; the mischief is working gradually on ; as your uncle would call it, 'in a patient.'"

Joan stopped for a moment, and then added, "He don't say it of her ; and I fancy pretends not to see it sometimes."

"I don't think that, Joan ; he sees it, but he don't want her to see it more than possible, or any of us. That, I think, is good of him ; it could not alter what I am sure is inevitable—what, something tells me, must take place before long !"

"You are right, Miss Rosey ; something does indeed tell that plainly, poor lamb ! I was only thinking, as she lay there in bed, looking so sweet and childlike, that it seems but the other day I first saw her little angel face in her tiny cap, and nursed her in her long robe. I don't know how it is, but these recollections seem more alive to-night

than ever. Perhaps it is that she looks better for your coming, and prattled away quite merrily while I undressed her, and something in her face brought back to my mind her baby one."

"Ah! you told me all about her coming, once. Aunt Rachel and I have often talked it over, and she always says it appeared so strange to her that they had never heard Dr. Thornton speak of any relation of the name of Ending, before Eve was brought down here to them. She supposes, and so does grand-mamma, that his niece must have married very badly; against his consent, perhaps."

"That is what he told me himself—at least, that she had married very badly. But I have my doubts, miss, as to the name; indeed, more than doubts! and I could tell the reason why, but, perhaps, these things are better left unspoken. It could do no good; though, I must confess, I have a woman's curiosity about her, poor child!"

"You hinted at something of the sort before, I believe, Joan; but when I told mamma,

she said it was impossible for anybody to tell what relations he might have, for persons themselves sometimes hardly knew all who belonged to them. But you look so very expressive about it, and you say 'you have more than doubts'—may I ask your reasons? for I frankly own I feel as interested (I will not call it curious) as you do."

"Well, Miss Rose, I don't mind telling you, but I must ask you not to let it go any further; sometimes I feel as if I should like one other person to know what I heard; I do forcibly to-night, and I cannot tell why."

"I will not speak of what you tell me, Joan, unless it should prove right to do so at a future time—and then you would not object to my doing so, I am sure."

"No, Miss Lindsay, dear, I would not. That there is some secret about the poor darling, I am convinced; and the little knowledge I have of it has made me very cross; and when your good uncle, the Doctor, has been in his tantrums, I have almost exploded, myself, more than once,

but I have kept his secret (if it be one) for a long time—and would have kept it, had he asked me, and confided in me, for ever : but, perhaps, there is nothing much in it after all. You have heard me say, Miss Rose, it was a cold, bleak winter's night, when Mr. Blight brought the nurse and infant to your uncle. I expected them, as I have often told you ; for your uncle, when he returned from his uncle's abroad (where he had been five months or more), had gone away the very morning, after he had arrived home, down into the north of England to see a niece who, he said, was dying ; he was absent three days, and when he came home, almost the first words he said were : 'Joan, it is all over ; I have made arrangements for the poor infant to be brought here ; I took a wet-nurse down with me to L——, and Mr. Blight will see them safely here to-morrow. Do all you can for the child.' He seemed as if he could hardly speak, and, taking the candle out of my hand, he walked quickly up stairs to his own room. They arrived the next day,

in the evening, the dear baby and its nurse, under the care of Mr. Blight : how I dreaded him then."

" Well, I don't think you dread him now, Joan," said Rose, smiling.

" No, miss, I despise him—I may say I loathe him—to have designs on that sweet innocent, that I heard Mr. Ralph say one day was only fit for Heaven !"

" Designs ! Joan, that is a very strong term ; it appears that he is very fond of her, and I do think he ought to be ashamed of himself—she is a child to him. If he were a good man one would say nothing about his likings ; and really we are all rather unjust to this said ' Blight,' for we know nothing really wrong in him."

" No, miss ; that is true, and perhaps you'll say it is not for such as I am to give an opinion ; but, although I *know* nothing wrong of him, I am quite sure there is much wrong in him ; and indeed, I may say I do know something very wrong in him."

" What is that, Joan ?"

" Well, miss ; of course after admiring the

dear baby (who was a lovely little picture—like wax-work), I entered into conversation with the nurse. She told me the Doctor had called for her at the Lying-in Institution, the day he went to L——, that he took her with him by the train a great part of the way, and then in a coach some miles, where they stopped at a public-house to change horses, and found Mr. Blight waiting for them; who, it seemed, had a fly in readiness, into which they got, and went the remainder of their journey to some hotel (I forget the name of it), where the gentlemen had dinner, and she took tea with the mistress of the house; she was asked all sorts of questions, but all she could reply to the numerous inquiries of the landlady and her daughters was, that she was brought down there to take charge of a poor infant who had lost its mother, and convey it safely back to London in a few days—after the funeral was over, she believed. In vain the landlady interrogated her about some mad woman—‘A sweet young lady.’ She described her who had been brought there some months back by

that thin gentleman without any whiskers up stairs; that they had dined there, and then gone on, and she had not even heard the lady's name; but since then they had been told she was a widow lady, and had gone mad in her confinement; that she was in apartments at a small cottage four miles from there, and many other little particulars that amounted to nothing, and that poor Mary Brown got tired of listening to; all she could imagine was that the Doctor's poor niece might have been there with Mr. Blight; but the landlady was so positive that she was not dead, that her curiosity seemed roused, and like many people in a country village, she appeared to pass her time in sifting out the affairs of those around her; but Mary was tired with her long journey, and very glad to get to bed, and thought no more of the chattering in the bar till the next morning, when she was told that her new master came in about half-past eleven at night, looking like a very ghost, and that he and Mr. Blight had sat up talking till the morning was far advanced. In the after-

noon of that day the baby was brought to her, and very glad she was to get it, both for its poor little sake and for her own. A stout, ungainly looking woman brought it, whom Mary concluded was the monthly nurse, by her conversation; she informed her, among other things relative to the child, that it had been a 'puny brat' from the first, and had tired her out with its squalling. However that might have been, the poor little creature appeared to have no strength to cry then, or, as Mary said, scarcely to move; and very pleased was she when the cold-hearted woman took her leave, and she could fondle the little stranger to her breast to her heart's content. Mary was a meek, retiring young woman, and had felt afraid of the great, ill-mannered nurse; so she had asked no questions, and consequently could not give the landlady, who came to her room to have a bit of gossip after the bulky personage had left, any more satisfactory intelligence than she had done the night before; which that lady perceiving, after inspecting and pitying the little forlorn

one, went off also to seek, I suppose, for scandal elsewhere ; and Mary was at last left alone with her poor charge, who was so weak and ill that Dr. Thornton thought it best that they should remain at the hotel another day and night. He came up to see it twice, she said, and each time, after looking at it, turned away saying, ' It cannot live.' But, however, it did live, and throve wonderfully on its comfort."

"And was Mary Brown always kind to it?"

"Oh, yes ; she dearly loved Miss Ending, and nursed her till she was very ill herself, and obliged to leave ; the Doctor got her into the Hospital at last ; she was a very worthy, good young woman."

"I think you told me she died?"

"Oh yes, miss ; she died a very little while after. But what I wanted to tell you was a circumstance that happened about three months after the dear baby came. She had been very ill—so ill, that no hope was given of her life, and for three nights I had not had my things off. It was past twelve

o'clock on the night I speak of, and feeling quite worn out, I went to lie down for an hour, really fearing that all would be over before I returned to the room in which the poor infant lay; and begging Mary (who had just risen to take her turn in watching) to call me if there was the slightest change. I almost feared to leave, for Mary, who was at that time stout and hearty, could not always keep her eyes open in those long night-watches, and used frequently to doze in her chair; but I knew the Doctor never let more than an hour intervene (at that time there was so much danger) between his visits to the babe; so that comforted me. I used to wonder how he managed to wake, for he went to bed each night, but punctually at the turn of every hour he made his appearance, just satisfied himself by holding the tiny pulse, and ordering anything he thought requisite, and then he went away again in silence. If we ventured to ask him how he thought her, he would only answer, sternly, 'No hope.' Well, I went to lie down, and very glad I was to rest a little.

It was some time before I got to sleep, but by degrees I forgot myself, and then I must have slept soundly for some hours, for when I awoke the grey light of morning had begun to peep through the shutters. I roused myself directly, and stole along the landing on tiptoe : all was very silent, and I felt a glimmer of hope that a change might have taken place for the better ; for I knew they would have summoned me had the poor darling died. My hope, however, was soon extinguished, for just as I reached the door, which stood partly open, I heard a deep groan from your uncle, who was at the other side of the bed, and evidently had not heard my footsteps. Mary was fast asleep in the easy-chair just opposite the bed. I stood a moment, awe-struck, for the groan was repeated so deeply and bitterly, it filled me with wonder ; for Dr. Thornton was so used to deathbed scenes, that if the poor baby was dying, which I indeed feared to be the case, it seemed very unaccountable how he should have become so strongly attached to his niece's child as to feel the present one so

keenly—of such an infant, too; I could not understand it. Presently he spoke, and I shall never forget the tones of his voice: ‘O God! and is this the *ending* of all?’ I really imagined the little sufferer was gone, and almost sprang to his side. He turned and looked at me as if he would have knocked me down, and knitting his brows till they met, he said, ‘Woman, how long have you been here?’ I told him only a few minutes, and that I thought he said it was the ‘ending of all,’ and that had made me hurry to the bedside. He answered, angrily, ‘You women have d——d long ears, but they are not always correct.’ I said I was glad my niece, Mrs. Ending, was gone before this happened. ‘Give me those drops; I really think she may revive yet.’ I could plainly see by his manner that he was glad I had not heard more, and he thought he had succeeded in making me disbelieve my own ears; but he was very much mistaken. I have never forgotten what I heard, nor the way in which the words were spoken. From that day to this, the pretty creature has gone

by the name of 'Ending.' Now, what do you think of all this, Miss Lindsay, dear?"

"Well, Joan, there is only one thing to think, that I see, and that is, what we have supposed all along is correct—that there is some great mystery attached to dear Eve; but what that mystery is, is what neither you nor I can form the least idea of. It would be very terrible to think her parents are living now, and she is so ill, and they not to know anything about it. What puzzles me most is, what that Blight can have to do with the affair."

"Why, you see, miss, he has always managed all the Doctor's affairs. Ever since I first lived with the Doctor, before he went into partnership with Mr. Steele, and when the partnership was dissolved, and he was away from England so long, Mr. Blight superintended everything; so perhaps it was not so much to be wondered at, that your uncle, who dislikes trouble of any kind, employed him to settle his niece's affairs (if she was his niece), and take charge of the baby on its way to town with Mary, its nurse,

as she knew nothing of that part of the country."

"What makes you say, 'if she was his niece,' Joan? Don't you think yourself, Eve is his niece's child?"

"Well, I confess I do not; and yet I don't know what else to think, though something runs in my old head at times, and has always done so, on and off. It's as well not to give way to such thoughts, but men will be men, as they always were, I suppose."

Rose paid no attention, apparently, to the latter part of old Joan's speech, but suddenly asked, "Did Mary Brown happen to hear the name of the stout, disagreeable woman?"

"The monthly nurse? Yes, at least she called herself, to Mary, Mrs. Kildew."

"I suppose she was never heard of again?"

"Yes; I fancy I remember hearing Mary say she met her once in the City, some months after, dressed very fine, with a young woman very like her in the face, whom Mary thought was her daughter, dressed finer still; but she took no notice of Mary, except to

whisper something to the young one, and they passed her very haughtily.

"Well now, Joan, I think I can manage, for it's getting late, if you'll just roll up my hair for me."

"Yes, miss; roll up the *silk*, as I heard Mr. Morley call it one day when he was speaking of you. He's a good young gentleman. When poor Miss Eve was so bad the other day, he was as kind and tender as a woman; and he seemed so glad when Mrs. Thornton told him you were coming—his eyes sparkled again."

Joan did not see the bright blush and the happy look her words occasioned; she was busy with the silken roll, which she at last finished to her satisfaction—forming a glossy coil round the young, well-shapen head; and having seen all straight, as she said, the fair tenant of the chamber was left to repose.

Rose sank upon her knees to offer up her evening homage, her thanksgiving, and her petitions to the great Lord of all. Strange how a few words carelessly spoken will sometimes stir the chords of a slumbering strain,

causing them to respond more sweetly in their low yearning melody. "He was so glad when he heard I was coming; his eyes sparkled with pleasure." Sweet hope! Blessed memory of each kind word spoken—of each fond look treasured! "And shall I not thank God for such lighteners upon my way? Will He not condescend to regard me and my minutest concerns? Assuredly He will. He will not turn away His face from the earnest appeal—the heartfelt prayer, though human love is mingled, for He knoweth our frame, and remembereth that we are dust."

Rose was about to lie down, when Joan spoke softly from the doorway, "If you are not in bed, Miss Lindsay, dear, I should like you to hear my angel singing. She has got into a strange habit lately of singing herself to sleep; so she calls it, but I think it is when she can't catch sleep. Just hark," added the old woman in a whisper, as Rose, having thrown her dressing-gown round her, stepped noiselessly to Eve's door—a little way from her own.

In a low voice, almost unearthly in its mellow sweetness, sang the gentle occupant :

“ I will come, I will come ;
 Let Thy voice soon be heard—
 Oh ! call thy poor wayfarer home :
 Though darkness surrounds me
 My light is Thy word ;
 It gildeth my pathway—I come.

“ Through perils—through trials—
 Oh ! hast not Thou given
 Thy ray ; though my frail heart will roam.
 Still guideth it swiftly
 And gently towards Heaven—
 Thy beacon of mercy—of home !”

“ God bless her !” murmured the old servant, as the voice died away ; “ she is going home. It would be well if we were all as fit to go.”

“ It would, indeed,” replied Rose, as once more wishing good night, she closed her door.

“ And so you are come, Miss Lindsay, to give a little of your beauteous bloom to our too pallid Lily.”

Rose bowed with some *hauteur*.

The little party of ladies had assembled in the drawing-room, the morning succeeding her arrival at Sea View, and were engaged in light fancy-work and chit-chat of the same description, when Mr. Blight was announced.

"Why, you are a very early visitor to-day," observed Mrs. Thornton; "surely not from London?"

"Oh, no! dear madam; I came down by the mail train last night. The good Doctor's tenants in the lower part of Doverton are giving us a little trouble just now. But a little forethought will, I have no doubt, overcome the difficulty. I think our fragile flower has imbibed a little of the Rose's bloom already," he added, approaching the sofa on which Eve reclined.

She raised her innocent eyes to his face for a moment and tried to smile; but the effort was a trial, and nothing more, as Rose, who was watching the strangely contrasted pair, could plainly see. Eve did, indeed, look a being of another sphere beside that ill-fashioned thing of earth, as the watcher

mentally termed him, and verily not without reason. He might well be called "Blight." All good qualities, if he had ever possessed any, were assuredly withered and dried up within him. He was rather tall than otherwise, but gaunt-looking and ill-proportioned; his hair was miserably thin, and tinged with grey; his head was in no part bald, but had this meagre, grizzly scattering all over; he had no whiskers, and his face was lean and lank, possessing a pair of eyes small, piercing, and ferret-like, but which at times assumed, nevertheless, a kind of coaxing, fawning expression, more disgusting than their natural one, to those which could in any way read the duplicity of his. There was a set smile about the mouth which, in those above-named eyes, wore a very sinister import. Yet, with all these deficiencies, or rather defects, of person, the man had the strange power of a peculiar fascination, with which he would often rivet the attention of strangers, who would, in after speech, designate him as a very pleasant fellow. But still more strange to add, that strangers alone were

not the only victims to such fascination—if we can apply that term to what was, in reality, low, grovelling cunning. The Doctor, with all his boasted insight into character, was his greatest dupe; not that Blight could exercise much of his fascination upon him, for he was right in saying he was not to be so “humbugged.” He was certainly not to be humbugged in the same soft way as many, but he was not proof against humbug of a different and more intricate description—of a harder and more obdurate kind. Blight never contradicted him, never interrupted him, never thwarted him, never even differed with him in opinion, unless pointedly asked for his own, and then, if it wavered from that given, it would be so deferentially and humbly offered, that no offence could possibly be taken. He would sit and listen with heroic patience to all the Doctor’s egotisms, his plans, his goings and comings, his long relations of his own exploits, his wonderful feats and adventures told over for the hundredth time, and, in fact, to any topic the Doctor’s tongue chose to dilate upon, which,

much as he blamed those of the fairer sex, was an incessant clatterer upon any subject appertaining to himself or his belongings. Yet, with all his self-importance, he was most thoroughly dependent upon his submissive "man of law." In a word, to use a common phrase, Blight could turn his patron round with his little finger.

CHAPTER VIII.

"Family secrets; home discussions; like a flock are we,
Varying in foddder, as in form and feature. We are,
verily,
A motley group. Chance throws queer company."

THE conversation in the drawing-room soon flagged; the presence of Blight had stayed the genial flow of sentiment, hushed Rose's merry laugh, and checked Eve's sunny smile. Mrs. Thornton felt, in politeness, bound to offer, every now and then, some commonplace remark, which mostly drew forth rather lengthy responses from him addressed, causing a kind of desultory flow of discourse very amusing to Rose Lindsay, who had a keen sense and enjoyment of the ludicrous.

She was seated on an ottoman by the side of Eve, and had the rudeness to whisper

pretty loudly in that young lady's ear that "she wished he'd take himself off," that "he blighted all her kindly feelings," &c., succeeding in her desire of causing an amused smile about the little pensive mouth of the Lily; but the small fair head was bent, the timid, trusting eye fixed steadfastly upon the fairy-looking fabric the thin transparent hands were forming, like the too tender flower fearing to expand, for the destroying, noxious insect, so deadly in its purpose, hovering near. But, after the same simile, the insect watched the flower with a cat-like eagerness. Yes; Blight craved for the delicate blossom beyond his grasp.

At length Rose, whose patience was fairly exhausted, asked abruptly, "If he had come to spend the day with them?"

He returned playfully, "What! as droll as ever, Miss Rose." Rose looked anything but droll. "I am waiting for your excellent uncle; but I hope I don't intrude."

Rose's brow told him that he did, very plainly; and the whisper, "He could call again," was too much for her aunt's gravity.

"The Doctor will not be long now," said that lady, looking at the timepiece; "he is seldom gone more than an hour to Croft's Manor. Oh! I thought it was him," she added, as Ralph opened the door.

Even the ceremony of shaking hands had been dispensed with for some time by Blight and the new-comer; their mutual aversion was manifest. While the latter bowed coldly, the former only bestowed a slight nod of recognition, followed by a glance of intense hatred, which did not escape the quick eye of Rose Lindsay, nor, as it so happened, the less observing one of the invalid, who looked up suddenly, with a bright light on her countenance, when Ralph Thornton entered.

"Morley is here, Rose, and he wishes to see you, if you will come down into the study for a few moments."

Rose looked a very 'rose,' and her heart beat painfully, as she prepared to comply.

"Will not Mr. Morley walk up stairs?" enquired Mrs. Thornton.

"No; if you will excuse him, Aunt Rachel; he has no time to spare this morn-

ing ; but he has a message, I think, for Rose, from General Lindsay."

The speaker looked full at Blight while delivering the last sentence, whose withering eyes were fixed on Rose with a gleam of insolent satire. She arose from the ottoman, returning his glance with one which well-nigh withered even the self-possession of Blight ; and, extending her hand with the air of a queen to a kneeling subject, she said with irony, "Adieu, Mr. Blight ; I suppose the pleasure of our interview is over for to-day, unless you will favour us in the study."

She almost wished he would take her at her word, that poor Eve might be relieved of a presence so thoroughly distasteful to her, and which Rose well knew would become more unbearable after her departure from the coterie ; for it was very easy to perceive that Mr. Blight felt anything but easy, when she was by ; this fact was visible to other perception than her own. She perfectly understood the power she held over him, that she could read through him—

through his deceitful nature; and he was very often uncomfortably alive to the scrutiny. So, in his case it was a great relief when Miss Lindsay left the room.

As the latter had feared, Eve was inflicted, in consequence, by the vacant seat by her side being retaken, and compliments and attentions lavished upon her which were very loathsome to her guileless nature.

Rose thought of old Joan's remark of sparkling eyes when she entered the study, and in the warm shake of the hand and frank, kind reception forgot, for the moment, all past doubts and fears. Morley said he had no time to spare, but hearing she had arrived, he had ridden round just to see how she was before proceeding to M——, where he was going on business for Mr. Greenhill. "But I want to speak to the Doctor, so I will step up in the evening, and then I shall see you again, and you can tell me all news of home and dear old Teevesdale Park."

At the remembrance of home, and what she had heard when last there, Rose in-

voluntarily drew back from the hand which still held her own. The motion was observed by Morley, and also the inquiring look accompanying it, with the rather confused reply that, "She had not been to Morley Court above once or twice since he left, and then only for a few minutes." At a loss to understand the sudden change in her manner, Morley's sensitive heart took alarm, and, unconsciously, his own grew more reserved, so that the "farewell" was far less warm than the greeting had been, leaving a dull chill on each young mind for after-thought.

There had been no message given from Uncle Lindsay, nor, indeed, had Rose asked for or expected any. The meeting, she felt, had been sought by him alone for the pleasure of seeing her, and there was a pang on the reflection that she had betrayed any feeling which should diminish it. Ralph noticed her abstraction after Morley had left. She stood at the window gazing absently down the path he had taken. Now, Ralph liked Rose Lindsay, if he could be said to have liked anybody; at all events he felt more

interested in her than in any other being with whom he came in contact—at least, of “womankind.” We do not, of course, include his extraordinary sentiments with regard to Eve—his passion, which partook of the nature of idolatry. But there were times when he felt very angry with Miss Lindsay; and, strange to say, she routed him upon his eccentricities and solitary habits until he usually turned “rusty,” as she would call it; and then, changing her tactics, she would take up the thread of the ridiculous, in the weaving of which she (when in the humour) excelled, and would win him, by her witticisms, into a smile. Indeed, it was a well-known fact, that Ralph had only been known to laugh heartily two or three times in his life, and these were when Miss Lindsay had been his companion.

“Critics!” how will you pull this character to pieces? Frivolous in the extreme, how could any depth exist under so light, so shallow, a surface? Is it light, to have a bright warm heart, with a sunny glimpse of the ludicrous—with a keen enjoyment of

the absurd ? And is it impossible for such a heart to hold treasures of intrinsic value, of countless price ? A mine of deep feelings and affections, a sanctuary of hope and faith, and a power to do and to dare in the cause of the good and true ? If such is impossible for poor human nature, Rose Lindsay's heart was a miracle, for it was in the possession of all these.

"You look thoughtful," said Ralph, laconically.

"I suppose I do, for I *am thinking*. What of that, Master Ralph ? Do you think me so very thoughtless ?"

"I don't know that I have ever thought about you, particularly," quoth Ralph, dipping his brush and resuming his painting.

"It was well you put the last word in, sir ; you are very complimentary, I'm sure. Now, I advise you to think about me, and very particularly. Do you hear ? It will be better than thinking all about yourself, which is what I expect you do, half your time at least."

"And what do I think about the other half, pray?" asked he, sullenly.

"Oh, about a 'fair lady,' I imagine," she answered, demurely.

"And what makes you think that? One would think you were going off into Morley's strain."

"And what might that be?"

"Oh, only that he's been talking about getting married, and such humbug. I beg pardon."

"You may well do so," said Rose, trying to speak playfully, but breathing very fast.

"What made him speak to you of that?"

"You may well ask. It began by his telling me he met Uncle Thornton in the chaise, on his way to the Manor, I suppose, this morning; and that he pulled up, and to his surprise began complimenting him in a way that he could not at all understand. He asked for an explanation, and he says the Doctor only winked and shook his head, and asked, knowingly, 'When it was to be?' Morley replied, in his careless way, that 'he wished he knew himself, and that he sup-

posed he should some day.' But I don't think he liked it for all his easy way of taking it. He said he thought people were very busy about others' affairs."

"How silly of aunt to tell Uncle Thornton of what I told her last night."

"Yes, silly indeed, to tell anything to a man who can't keep his tongue from wagging—who couldn't do so for his very life."

"Now, come, Master Ralph, none of that *humbug*, I was going to say, for you are really talking that now. It was natural for uncle to congratulate him, after all, for the De Veres are a high family."

"Oh! I thought the fat would be in the fire—that you wouldn't take it quite so easily, from what I heard. I'm glad to find your heart's not broken."

"Well, go on. Did he recommend you to marry?" questioned Rose, commanding her voice as well as she could, but turning to the window again to hide her blanched cheek.

"Yes, you've hit it," was the reply, after

a long pause. "I called it all humbug and nonsense, as I did to you just now; and, by Jupiter! didn't he take it up warmly, that's all! and then, after taming down a little, he said: 'Marriage was often the redeeming step taken by a man from falling into great and serious errors; that it led him to think of higher and nobler pursuits than those in which he too frequently indulged, and that home joys and comforts were earth's greatest blessings.' In fact, he came out like a parson, as he does sometimes; but I don't mind hearing him,—there's a nice natural way about him. He wound up, actually, by saying that it might be the making of *me*. I laughed, and asked him how it could make me, or set me up in the world? and he answered, 'That it would perhaps make me love this world, and lead me to a better.' I don't think anything would make me care much for this world, anyhow; and yet that might make it more tolerable—when one comes to think about it," he added, looking curiously at his auditor; "but as to its leading me to a better, that's all moonshine. I hate

'cant.' I am but as other dogs, and like other dogs shall die."

"And that's the sentence you cast on *all*, I believe," remarked Rose, who well knew the unhappy principles of the speaker, and felt very disinclined to argue the point just then.

"All are nothing to me; they may gull themselves to their own satisfaction, and look forward to going into another world if they choose, each to play a fool's part, as he has done in this; as for me, I am heartily sick of the one I am in, and have no desire to be lugged into any other."

"You would rather be as the brute which perisheth?" asked Rose, in the same indifferent tone as he had used.

"Exactly; what should one want more?" he answered.

Her voice was changed now into ardent fervour. "Want! the radiant visions of the soul realized! a glorious resurrection! pardon! peace and rest for evermore!"

"Well, you'd have rest, if you were *nothing*."

The words were indifferently spoken, but the artist's head bent lower over his palette; he was cowed beneath the truthful gaze and the sudden energy of the fair young being before him.

"Ralph! there is *one* whom you love; you could not make such a speech to her! and in her presence you could not feel the truth of it. Ernest Morley is right! Under her influence, and the influence of your own love, such cruel doctrine, such awful sentences, would fade away, and your mind would flow by degrees into the same calm, peaceful channel as hers."

"What are you talking about?" Fire flashed in the young man's eye, and he stamped his foot till the canvas shook upon the easel.

"Help, for you," said Rose, firmly, but nevertheless daunted in her turn, at such uncalled-for emotion.

"Explain yourself," was the command, rather than request, while every feature worked convulsively.

"If you put yourself into such passions,

I had better not explain, I think," was the rather stern rejoinder. "Is there anything to cause such anger, in recommending you to unite your fate with hers, whose gentle yet firm judgment should lead it peacefully with her own—whose heart's love (should she be spared) would call forth the tenderness, and, it is to be hoped, the reason, and the better feeling of yours?"

"Do I understand you rightly, that you allude to a spirit lent to this dull earth for a while for mortals to look upon and worship? Dare you thus wantonly to speak of one whose every thought and feeling are centred upon what we, in our ignorance, call Heaven, —whose pure nature looks down upon man as the reptile, the grovelling reptile that he is, with the pity and sorrow of the celestial creature belonging to the sphere from which she came, and is now returning,—a sphere of which we can have no conception, no more than of *her love*, which is not of earth!"

"Excuse me," said Rose, smiling, in spite of her effort to speak seriously, for his frown grew dark as night; "but your opinions are

so very strange, Ralph! Poor Eve is very ill, we all know, and very little hope is left for her ultimate recovery, unless some great change takes place."

He made an impatient gesture and stamped his foot again; but Rose laughed outright as she said, "Depend upon it, *her love* would soon descend to earth and to *you*, if she knew how you worshipped her; and that change of affairs might do a great deal. I have heard of things of the kind curing in some cases. Where the feelings are young and susceptible, the mind feels a void which is filled up when it has some prospect to dwell upon entirely its own; and union with another mind is, to an affectionate nature like hers, the brightest and sweetest prospect this world can give. As to her love being 'all above earth,' or whatever you said about it," continued she, laughing again, for he had become seemingly calm and intent on mixing his colours, "I very much doubt it, indeed. I know she loves everybody, even as other poor mortals love, and if you mean that 'love of all others,' of which we were

speaking, I cannot agree that she is to differ from frail humanity any more in this than in any other feeling common to our nature. It is too true, as you say, that she looks as though 'she were going to a holier sphere,'" and Rose's eyes filled ; "but though prepared to go, as few are, she does not look down with indifference or distaste upon her fellow-beings ; she would not be prepared if she did. Her young life has been a strange one. Tended with every care and kindness by those with whom she has been placed, she has nevertheless felt, from the first dawn of reason, that mystery hung around her. She has owned as much to me—that the Doctor has never spoken a word to her of father or of mother—'earth's two holiest words'—that her birth and parentage have been alike veiled in obscurity. You accuse our uncle of letting his tongue run loose. One would think on such a topic he would have given it fair play, if only out of compassion for the poor orphan child."

"Compassion !—what has he ever said to me of *my* parents? Only that had my

father lived, I should have been a worthier person than I now am. In that he hits himself—not me!”

“Well, never mind that now—we were talking of Eve,” remarked Rose, hastily, always glad to turn from a subject which was ever uppermost in his mind—*want of sympathy in the guardian of his childhood and youth.* (Parents and guardians heed!)

“We were talking about her love, and I spoke of that love which is above all other! I mean, of course, relative to this world. I do not say that she has experienced that love, because I really do not think her simple, childlike mind has ever reflected or even paused upon the matter; indeed, I am sure it would startle her in no small degree to hint at such. But that she has likes and dislikes in common with us all is most perceptible in her aversion to that. *Blight.* Perhaps you have not perceived it—few would, she is so quiet. But Ralph, how would you like *him*, that crafty meddler, to obtain the prize?”

“You are quoting my words—I did call

him a 'crafty meddler;' I meant it. But, Rose, enough of this. You are presuming upon a theme which is maddening. *Blight* may creep noiselessly, eating up or destroying by his pestilential breath every shattered shrub, every hale tree, every poor lost flower around him, but he cannot touch *her*! I tell you—you *who in your blindness see it not*—that she is beyond the pale of the earthworm—beyond the reach of the disasters which befall his damned, corroded existence!"

"Whatever do you mean, Ralph; she is 'one of us'! Come down *yourself* from this high-flown nonsense! Any one would think you mad to hear you. I am not easily awed, nor will your knitted brow have that effect upon me, but your words and gestures are truly frightful to hear and to behold. Any person to read of such a character as yours would pronounce a sentence not over gratifying upon the ideas or the imagination of its author. Why, what a daub you are making of that good man's nose! Whose is it? Is it meant for Ernest Morley?"

Rose could not conceal her merriment, for the brush had wandered strangely under the guidance of the excited hand.

"It is your fault," said the painter, still continuing his employment nervously.

"I wish to God, Rose, you would not speak of this, or think of such a subject again; you don't know what I feel. If you were a man, I'd ——"

"Murder me, I suppose! Well, we will not talk of it again. All I can say is, that I hope you will come to your senses some day, and then you'll *see* what you *feel* now in its *true light*, and not spurn the 'reality' for the 'false shadow.' I must go; Aunt will wonder what I'm doing all this time."

"Stay one moment; promise, Rose, that you will never class *her* again among the 'vile things of clay.'"

"Well, her clay is certainly not vile; it is very white and soft; you may get a 'viler thing' of clay for a wife. I should like to be that 'thing' just now, if only to serve you out in your own coin." And with a merry laugh Rose was leaving the study.

"One moment," and again that curious gaze was fixed upon her.

"You have just said you would like to *be* what you have advised me to *get*. Will you (as your heart is free, as the people of this world have it) have pity upon mine; and, as you think it requires guidance, will you consent to be its guiding star?"

For a moment there was silence. Rose was so completely taken back by this extraordinary table-turning, as she afterwards called it, that she stared in unfeigned surprise and almost alarm at the figure before her, in its eccentric tasselled cap and embroidered velvet coat, really fearing that that figure had taken leave of its senses. But in the next, the whole scene and circumstance appeared before her so truly ridiculous, so genuine a burlesque, that she was feign to give way to the amusement she felt, and, sitting down in the large old chair, she laughed till the tears ran down her cheeks. His look of offended dignity, as he stood on the rug before her, tickled her fancy the more, and it was some minutes before she

could gain the composure to say, "She was obliged to him, but she could not play 'second fiddle' to anybody; that she would leave him to find out the strings of his 'first.' That she required some sort of homage from the man who wished her to be his wife; and though having no desire to be thought higher than 'mortal mould,' she should not wish to be looked upon by him only as a 'vile thing of clay.'" So saying, she bowed rather coolly, and left the room; and the artist remained to meditate upon his mistake.

"What a time you have been, dear Rosey," said Eve, languidly, as the former entered the drawing-room, some minutes after the scene in the study. "Lunch is ready; John has been up twice to tell us; but Aunt Maria is with Aunt Rachel in her bedroom, and though she is so dreadfully particular at home about 'hours,' she always keeps us waiting when she is here."

This was a great deal for Eve to say, who seldom or ever complained of anybody; but

Rose saw in a moment that she was fatigued in mind and body.

"You want your lunch, darling, and you shall have it. I will go up to aunt. Has Mr. Blight gone?"

"Oh! yes; uncle and he are gone somewhere together; he is coming back to dinner, I believe;" and Eve sighed heavily.

"Come, Aunt Maria!" called Rose, up the stairs, "Eve is nearly fainting for lunch! Shall we go and begin, Aunt Rachel."

The two aunts made their appearance; Miss Blue looked very much her name as she descended the stairs followed by her sister.

"Thoughtless as ever, Rose," said she, stiffly; "is this your greeting after absence?"

"I shall be very happy to greet you more warmly if you will come and let us have lunch, my good aunt." And after respectfully kissing the tall, grim-looking lady, Rose followed, with Eve's arm twined in hers, to the dining-room.

Perhaps there never was a greater contrast between two sisters than in those seated at the luncheon table at Sea View. Although, maybe, a family likeness existed, so little has feature to do with general appearance, that they looked the very reverse of one another, and Rose's types of 'Summer' and 'Winter' were not badly applied. Mrs. Thornton was all smiles and sunshine, especially in the absence of the irascible Doctor, whom she could not understand, and whose cutting speeches would cast a shade very frequently over her cheerful countenance. There were also sometimes lines of anxious thought written there, where in days of yore they had been unknown. But Aunt Rachel had her cares, and her dear Eve's state of health was one of her chief. Now Miss Blue (or Miss Maria, as she persisted was her proper appellation), was a person exempt from care, considering that she had reached the age of fifty-four, and never cared for anybody but herself; and having always possessed a very hard and robust constitution, she had not needed to expend much of that

article upon it ; she, therefore, considered the present system of rearing youth exceedingly debilitating (in a moral as well as a physical sense), and thought all young people of the present day weak in body and mind, and very inferior to those of her own time. Numberless had been the questions put to Rose relative to the "sweet pets" at Teevesdale, and their most delightful owner, the General.

Miss Maria cast a longing eye in that direction, and considering she had only seen the Park once, and its delightful owner twice, in her lifetime, (in each of which interviews he had shunned her as much as his native politeness would permit), she took a most lively interest in him and his concerns. Rose thoroughly enjoyed replying to all those interrogations, and the mischievous twinkle of her eye was altogether misunderstood by poor Miss Maria, who would be quite unconscious of the amusement she caused. But to-day Rose did not enter into particulars with her usual minuteness. Her spirits were damped. The circumstance of

the morning, although it had caused her so much merriment at the time, left a disagreeable, if not a painful, impression upon her mind.

Ralph had his lunch in the study, which was a common occurrence, and, in this instance, she felt glad he did not appear, as she wished to think a little over what had taken place before seeing him again. The affair puzzled and surprised her more than anything that had yet happened under her notice; she had always felt so convinced that Ralph loved Eve in a manner which would, certainly, lead him to prefer her above all other women as his companion for life. His strange notions were incomprehensible; but of this she felt assured, that his love could not have been of the order she imagined, or he never would have offered his heart and hand to another. And then, she thought of his offended manner, which she had ridiculed so openly; and then called to mind his earnest glance, proving that, for the moment at least, his feelings had been genuine. At all events, it was anything but

a pleasant retrospect, and she felt very angry with herself that she had pursued the theme which led to it, in spite of his repeated desire that she should cease: it was too late now to care. What had passed was beyond recall, and the only thing left to be done was to treat any effects it might leave, in the wisest manner possible. Should she tell Eve? Well, Eve seemed to look upon him in the light of a dear brother. She would think about it. Of any other feeling towards him in Eve's simple breast, Rose never entertained a thought; only that she had believed a warmer one might have been easily awakened for one in whose welfare she had ever taken so deep and affectionate an interest.

"Pray, my dear Rose, lay that book down; it is the height of *inconsistency* to read while at luncheon."

"My good aunt, I have helped you to ham, and I have cut the bread; surely, while dear Aunt Rachel dissects that fowl (as the Doctor would say), there is no harm in reading just a little bit."

"Young ladies have their own notions

now-a-days, and are allowed to indulge in them. In my time manners were studied a little more."

"They didn't get deeply interested in books in your time, aunt, I suppose. It certainly is rather rude to read at meal-time, but luncheon is not a set meal, and it was only a few lines I wanted to finish; however, I humbly beg pardon."

"And what is it rivets your attention so greatly? A novel, or some such trash, I suppose."

"Bravo! Isn't that like Uncle Thornton? Capital!" And Rose clapped her hands in great enjoyment at the idea of any resemblance between grim Aunt Maria and the energetic Doctor, whose countenance and manner were the very opposite of hers.

Now, strange to say, Miss Blue thought it no great compliment to be likened to the Doctor, in word or deed, for in reality she disliked him heartily, and there was little love lost between them. But she could not but acknowledge he was a very clever man; that his opinion was well worth having,

whether on business or otherwise; which opinion she prized, insomuch that it had been at times of great use to her since her father's death. Her mother was very aged and infirm, and, consequently, all money matters, &c., had been left to her discretion, in which she had often had occasion to apply for advice, in the delivery of which advice she was constrained to put up with a great many (what she considered) insulting remarks upon her stupidity, &c.; and not having the tact to take them in the light spirit in which they were given, or to resent them in the same witty sort of bantering, she harboured them in her very unpliant disposition, and neither forgot nor forgave them.

His opinion expressed of her in her absence, "That she was a stuck-up old fool," was certainly far from flattering; but there was this much to be said, that he would have, and, indeed, almost had, told her the same to her face. He bore her no malice as she did him, but merely looked upon her as a silly, weak-minded woman

(priding himself, of course, upon his own strength of mind). And thus these two narrow-minded people, so contrary and yet so alike, were sometimes very disagreeable to each other; while, at others, their mutual civility was most overpowering.

“Well, what is the name of the book, my love, which engrosses you so?”

“‘Good in Everything.’”

Aunt Blue raised her hands and eyes, and then, uttering a deep-toned sigh, like a groan, resumed her attack upon the wing of a fowl.

“Don’t you like it, aunt?”

“I cannot say that I have read it; the critique written upon it in the *John Bull*, a few weeks back, is quite sufficient.”

“Did you read the critique in the *Critic*? I should have feared *John Bull*—ay, the very name of that paper—too vulgar for you, Aunt Maria.”

“It came into my hands by chance, otherwise I do not like the idea of a paper called *John Bull*. No, I have read nothing else about it; nor do I wish to.”

“That is very unfair. You go entirely by what one man chooses to say ; which said man may be a great fool, and very much puzzled to write a work himself, whether good, bad, or indifferent. If you begin to read critiques, Aunt Maria, you ought to read all made upon a work, and above all, to read the work and judge for yourself.”

“My dear child,” observed Miss Blue, laying down her knife and fork, and speaking sternly and deliberately, “it is enough for you who are left so entirely to your own resources—your mind to its own guidance (which was a thing unheard of when I was young), to debase your mind if you will, by reading immoral books without openly recommending them to persons of discreet understanding.”

“Immoral!” echoed Rose, with a side glance of humour at Eve, who, however, did not appear to observe it, but was looking beseechingly at Mrs. Thornton.

“I do not think the book immoral, sister ; young people must know the world upon

which they are entering," said the latter, softly; "and there cannot be more to startle in *fiction* than there is in *real life*. There are many parts of that book very interesting, and they teach us, at all events, to lean upon a Hand which never forsakes,—that in our hour of extremity is ever by, to aid and cheer us."

"Rachel! I am surprised at your upholding such a work. Is it for young innocents to be made cognizant of the very basest parts of humanity? And there are in that book, I am given to understand, several—dear me!—well!—dear, dear me!" And Miss Maria, not knowing how to find vent in words for her indignation, held her plate for a piece more fowl. "The liver-wing, if you please, love."

The face of poor Eve was quite a study. She looked so pleading, so sorrowful. And the eyes which had lit up with animation at Aunt Rachel's speech, now drooped and became very watery.

Rose, whose ill-concealed mirth would have been complete but for that little sad

countenance, remarked that, "No one could deny there was an excellent moral, if rightly understood by the reader, but that it was a pity the book had not been published under the title given it by the authoress."

"Pray, what was that?" asked Miss Blue, abruptly. "Not that any title could redeem such improper contents."

"I think, Aunt Maria, it is unkind to run down a work as you do, who have never even read it," said Rose, with a slight touch of anger in her tone, for she could not bear to see Eve take the matter to heart. But the latter had always stood very much in awe of Miss Maria, and, moreover, she had read and delighted in the book in question, and gone, in fancy, with the heroine through all her trials in the Indian seas and in her own land; and, in fancy, had she felt also, with her, how the love of God and His mercy had led her safely through all, and brought her to the longed-for haven at last. And in Eve's tender heart a book lay like a friend, dearer than many so called, and, therefore, she felt Miss Maria's bitter charges against

it as she would the unjust censure made towards one whom she loved and respected; whose company had afforded her much pleasure, and in whose sympathy she could find comfort and repose.

"My love, it does not much signify what young people think; they must wait a few years till they are able to judge, before their opinions are of any weight."

"Indeed," was Rose's contemptuous reply. "I am afraid some wait long enough, from appearances."

"Well, my dear," observed Aunt Thornton, who saw Rose's colour rising, "you have not told us the original title."

"'Tide.'"

"Ah, well, I think that is more appropriate."

"But what's in a name?" asked Rose.

"Exactly," returned Miss Blue, "that is what I say. It cannot make unclean things clean, or change the contents of an immoral book. There is nothing material in any name."

"Except in *John Bull*, which is evidently, in your estimation, quite an excep-

tion to that long-quoted opinion, although it is as good a paper as any other."

Mrs. Thornton smiled and shook her head at Rose, but Aunt Maria seemed too occupied with her pocket-handkerchief to pay any attention to this comment, and the Doctor's steps being heard just then, caused a pause in the conversation.

"What, eating again! Why, here are four women together, actually *quiet*! *One's been 'going it' at any rate.* Why, Rose, your face is as red as a turkey-cock."

"Is it, uncle? Well, I can't help it; there's Aunt Maria running down a book I lent Eve, and saying all sorts of things against it; and she has never even read it. It is so foolish." And Miss Lindsay looked unutterable things at Miss Blue.

"Well, come. I think Miss Maria's a sensible woman for once."

"Ah! that's like you, Doctor; so full of wit," put in the gratified Miss Blue. "Now, is it not a wrong book for the growing mind?"

"It's like all of its kind—all novels—

only fit for the grate. 'Good in Everything' — 'Good for nothing,' as I call it."

"Shall I cut you a sandwich, dear uncle?" asked Eve, tremulously, dreading Rose's reply, for her nerves were very weak, and anything like a scene tried her very much. But Rose was silent while a sandwich was being cut, and then said, very coolly,—

"I fear you would be considered a man of bad taste, at least, if you gave that opinion in public. You take a wide range, indeed, when you thus doom all books called 'novels.' Some of the present day are treasures of good sense: true love and refined feeling. There are many that would do you good to read. I have brought one with me, which you must appreciate, if you have any mind at all. It is called, 'John Halifax, Gentleman.' Will you read it and see for yourself?"

"I read a novel! I shall begin to think I am going into second childhood when I do. A lot of 'bosh,' written by some maudlin woman, or still more contemptible man. For

curiosity's sake I looked at a part of that Eve was reading. If a young married woman, with a family, can't find anything better to do than to sit down and scribble about young ladies jumping into the water after young gentlemen, and a lot more twaddle of the same kind, it's a great pity. Just as if any woman would sacrifice herself so for any man. It's a stretch of the imagination. Their hearts are rather too sieve-like for any such marvellous proceeding."

Miss Lindsay rose from the table, with a very flushed cheek, and a great temptation to express her thoughts, "That it was useless to argue with those who were void of understanding." She made no reply, however, and the Doctor, satisfied with having had the last word (like a querulous child), remarked, that he was going to drive over to Lee, a pretty place some five miles distant, and asked Rose if she would like to accompany him. She assented, and ran up stairs to put her things on, glad of the chance of a good breeze, and with a sense of longing to get into the air, to be free—a natural

feeling to experience when we have been boxed up with natures so entirely discordant to our own.

Just as she was mounting the stairs she overheard her uncle's observation, that "He should not wonder if the girl was fool enough to scribble some nonsense herself some day."

On entering her room she locked the door, and sat down as if exhausted. Her first inward response was, "No ! never ! Much as the charm has stirred within me: *communion with my own thoughts, assisted by my God !*" She paused, and pushed her hair back from her lofty temples. "Could I bear this ? The reasoning of fools ! A critique in a newspaper I could bear, be it ever so humiliating ; it would be penned by one whose very sincerity might be worth the acknowledgment. 'But who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge ?' 'A scorner seeketh wisdom and findeth it not, but knowledge is easy unto him that understandeth.'"

And is there not knowledge, great knowledge, in the vast power of the creative brain ?

The highest talent given unto mortal to portray the foibles and the wisdom of his fellow-man? The thoughts—the feelings—actions—love—joy—woe; ay, life, with all its wanderings—its gilded bliss and fair deceivings—its joys—its wants—its false researches and endless repinings—its birth!—its aim!—its doom!—its end? Is there no knowledge to be gained from the oft-painted picture, yet ever new,—the oft-told tale, yet ever varied by the teller? Knowledge! Ay! “The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way, but the folly of fools is deceit.” Then, wherefore note the prating of a few poor dotards? Are there not many “who should use knowledge aright?—who should not scorn the gift because they are not the gifted?—who can trace the goodness of God be it in whatever form it may?”

A much admired authoress of our own time has said, “God’s little wood-birds sing the whole day long, and care not who will listen.” Then bury not a talent because those around thee know it not; an example is set thee in the little simple songstress of

the grove, who pours forth her sweet notes,
her rich melody, upon kindly nature, and
unto the Great Giver, whose ear is open to
the lowest strain, who will not scorn the
meanest tribute to Nature's God !

CHAPTER IX.

“Scorn not a road-side beggar, he may be
(Although dependent on thy charity)
One of real worth. A spirit there may lurk
Superior to thine. For Nature's handiwork
Is not the form alone. The Book of books declares
'We may entertain in strangers, angels unawares.'
Over our heads a sentence, by unseen Hand, may be—
For this good deed, in 'stormy hour,' a watch is
placed o'er thee.”

ROSE enjoyed the drive. The open chaise was far preferable to the close brougham, for the air was fresh and invigorating, and breezy gusts came cheerily from the sea. They passed by rich, sunny cornfields and down shady lanes, where the many varied and golden tints of the autumn foliage lent their own peculiar grace of mellow softness to the lulled-like harmony and sweetness of this most beautiful time of year. And Rose

fell into a contemplative mood ; then leaning back she gave herself up to the pleasant feeling of dreamy listlessness, which, by degrees, stole over her. There is something deliciously reviving to a weary spirit in being borne swiftly through the air, and hers was in that state of langour which would inhale the balmy influence and revel in the calm it caused.

The Doctor's tongue went the faster as they proceeded, and his having a silent auditor was rather pleasing than otherwise, as he could rattle on undisturbed, to his heart's content. To do him justice, he would have been a very merry and agreeable companion if he had only dispensed with much fulsome egotism, and allowed those with whom he conversed some part in the conversation. As it was, Rose felt too tired to listen to long relations in which he was, of course, always the hero, though she could not resist echoing his hearty laugh at some exploits still more ridiculous than the rest. One of which was, " That he had collared a

pickpocket and dragged him all along Ludgate Hill, with his hat off, and a mob after him," &c. But a feeling of contempt took possession of her breast when he added, "That Ludgate Hill, after all, was far more sensible than the steep one they were ascending."

And she was pondering, in a sleepy way, upon the varied feelings of the human heart, and its many and adverse turnings for enjoyment, when her attention was fairly aroused by a man in a begging attitude, standing on the steep pathway above them. His dress was that of a sailor, but so worn and threadbare, he might be said, literally, to have been "in rags." His feet were bare and his head also, for he held his torn hat stretched out before him; and as the chaise advanced he descended to the roadside and raised it, as if craving for assistance, but without uttering a word. Rose thought of a speech she had heard her good old Uncle Lindsay make, "That you seldom, or never, saw a sailor beg, at least, not a real one." And

there was no mistake about the one before her. His face was bronzed by hardship and distant climes, and his eyes were prominent and piercing; his forehead wrinkled by care and scorching suns, and his hair grizzly and grey, more from the ravages of rough seas and rougher life than of time.

"Oh! look at that poor man, uncle."

They were passing when the sailor made a gesture as if to stop them. Thornton threw him a shilling and was driving on, when his name was uttered loudly and distinctly, and he pulled up, gazing in some surprise at the beggar.

"You've forgotten me, Doctor. You saved my life some seven years ago. I don't easily forget a service, though I'm cussed tired of the world and the world's usage. May be you've forgotten Dick Harding of the Mill?"

"No! surely! Are you Dick Harding? Yes, to be sure. Why, no one would have known you, Dick, with that brown face. But how came you to get into such a plight

as this? I remember, you were discharged from the Mill. You'd better have done your duty, man, and stopped there. None of you fellows know when you're well off."

The man's tone changed, and he answered rather sulkily, "That people knew their own affairs best. That he had been abroad for the last five years and earned a little money, but as his d——d fate would have it, he had been robbed of all on his arrival in England, and was now making his way to his old mother, who lived at Gin Way, and was very 'hard up,' he believed; for the bit of news he had heard of her was, that she was to be turned out of her house by some brute of a landlord, because she owed a trifle of rent."

"Gin Way! Why most of those houses belong to me. There must be some mistake if she only owes a little rent."

"No, sir; the name is Bly or Blurt, or some such. He shall feel this when I see him, if he's used her ill." And the sailor held up a very formidable-looking fist.

"It is all right. I will see that your mother is not turned out, if your statement is true, that she does not owe much; but everybody must pay for their dwelling, and the rent is very trifling indeed. Mr. Blight is my solicitor. I will speak to him about it. Good day. Get some employment." And the chaise passed on.

"They're as d——d a lot as ever lived on the face of the earth—all in that horrid hole. I'm a good mind to get rid of the thing altogether. Blight will have it, it pays; I can't see how, but he understands these things better than I do." observed the Doctor.

"How ill and hungry that poor creature looked, uncle; didn't he?"

"He looked a confounded hypocrite," replied the Doctor, testily, who felt annoyed though he would not own it, at the severity of his legal adviser towards a widow woman, whose only child was at sea.

"I can't but think that his face was good;

and he spoke well about your saving his life."

"He did. He got hurt in the Mill, in some drunken folly, and I thought it was all over with him. I forget the particulars, but he was discharged in consequence of his conduct. Oh, he's a lying vagabond, I'll lay; and he'll get drunk at the first 'public' he comes to with that shilling, and forget all about his mother, or that he ever had one!"

But on their return, for once in his life, the Doctor was silent, as Rose said, "No, he has not got drunk! See! He is sitting on the hedge eating a crust of bread."

To her astonishment her uncle stopped again, and accosted the sailor, saying, "He was glad he had found something to eat."

"Yes, your honour, this bit of bread is sweet, for I have tasted nothing since last evening, and have walked many miles. I would to God! I had something to take my mother. I have been but a bad son, and had hoped to make up for it now."

"Well, my man, it is never too late to mend."

Rose looked at the Doctor with more fondness than she had ever done before. He slipped a sovereign into the poor man's hand, and told him "to call at Sea View on his way home, and he should have a good slice of meat and jug of beer to help him on."

Rose had not expected this kindness and generosity in her uncle. There was something fresh for reflection on the intricacy of the human heart. She would feign have conversed upon the life and misery of the sailor, whose bearing and manners, although bold in the extreme, had struck her as above those of the ordinary beggar. But Thornton seemed in no mood to continue the subject; on the contrary, it appeared to have made but little, if any, impression upon him; and, consequently, the remainder of the journey was passed in much the same manner as the commencement.

The dinner-bell had sounded when Joan, according to her orders, acquainted Miss

Lindsay with the arrival of the "poor sailor."

Sending word to her aunt that "she would be glad if they would not wait for her, but that she would join them soon," she descended, in her low evening dress, to the kitchen, and with her own hands furnished the poor sailor with a good substantial meal; then, taking a basket, she put in sundry "good things," for his mother; he, the mean while, watching her intently with his large piercing eyes. She expected to see him eat ravenously, and making some little remark to that effect, his countenance was lit up with a smile, which altered it strangely, taking all its former ferocity away, as he replied, "That to look at her was as good as a meal. That life for some was a hard lot, for they never saw its better parts."

And then Rose, thinking he would perhaps, eat more if she left him for a while, ran up stairs to her uncle's dressing-room, and very deliberately took the oldest pair of boots she could find; and from thence into

the hall, lifting from the peg Ralph's garden hat, after taking which articles to the man (who appeared less equal to express his thanks with his lips than with his eyes), she added some loose silver to the "basket's store," and repaired to the dining-room. There she found, in addition to their own party, Mr. Morley as well as Mr. Blight. The colour rushed to her cheek and back to her heart, for Ernest's bow of recognition was constrained ; and in her interest for the beggar she had forgotten her "morning adventure" with Ralph, between whom and Blight she took the vacant seat. She met Morley's eye fixed upon her own more than once, with, as she fancied, less warmth than formerly ; and then she remembered her own coolness in the morning and their parting, and her answering gaze grew cooler still.

She dreaded looking at Ralph, but he addressed her in the same indifferent tone as was his wont. So, on that point, she felt relieved. But Rose was really fatigued in

mind and body. She had not recovered her long journey of the previous day, and many contending feelings had tried her on the present one. Possessing a high spirit, her constitution was, nevertheless, delicate ; she was naturally excitable, and painfully susceptible ; therefore the relapse from overstrained feeling was great upon her.

“Why, Rosey, Eve has stolen your roses, for this evening at all events. How tired you look,” remarked Aunt Thornton.

“I was noticing the same,” said Morley, in an undertone.

“You have taken her too long a ride, Doctor,” continued Mrs. Thornton. “Had you not better lie down on the sofa, love ? John shall take your dinner to you there.”

In spite of the Doctor’s observation, that “she would be all right if they would leave her alone—that girls could do nothing now-a-days,” Rose agreed to her aunt’s proposal, and passed through the folding doors, which

were always partially closed during the dinner-hour, that anybody calling professionally on the Doctor might be asked into the front part, which he frequently used as a "consulting room;" his own "medicine closet," as he called it, being farther off and less convenient. There was a comfortable sofa here, on which Rose was very glad to recline, and the murmur of the voices at the dinner-table very soon lulled her into forgetfulness.

She lay between sleeping and waking when her aunt and Eve passed through, instead of going out by the other door, as usual. Now, although Rose's eyes were shut, she was conscious of Eve's whisper, "Don't wake her, dear aunty, she is fast asleep;" and was not quite certain whether she ought not to have undeceived her. But she felt so very much at her ease, and so glad of the rest, that, although she was also uncertain if it were quite right to stay and hear all the gentlemen talked about after the ladies had left the table, she could not

make up her mind to rouse herself out of the luxury of her dosy sensations. So there she remained, "meaning to go to sleep," but a voice, whose tones never sounded to her ear in vain, was now the solo in its full rich pathos at the dining-table. That Morley was pleading earnestly she could distinctly hear, and whether right or wrong, listen she must now, for she could not help it. Her uncle seemed disinclined, she thought, to grant the request, whatever it might be, for Morley was saying, "Depend upon it, sir, it will do him good. That very sullenness you complain of will wear off when he sees a little more of life."

"He is such an ungrateful scoundrel," rejoined the Doctor; "for the money I have advanced for him already I have never received one word of thanks."

"Pray do not think of that, my dear sir. I only ask you to allow him to accompany me as a friend—a companion; the obligation will be on my side."

"I am sure you are very good—very

kind indeed," replied Thornton, with much warmth; "but I could not allow——"

"Nay, my dear sir, do not allude to that again, I beg you; only give your sanction. You have said, 'Change does a great deal for many people physically;' and I am sure you will agree it does much for some "mentally." Paris is a place, I think, all people should go to once in their lives at least. Although there is much in it that is bad, the same as in our own metropolis, there is much that is good, and very much to be admired and learnt, as indeed there is everywhere."

Rose could not see Blight, but she could imagine his hypocritical expression of sanctity, which had, in fact, drawn forth the latter part of Morley's speech. Not a word had been spoken by him, either for or against the proposal, until now, when his dulcet, gliding voice declared, "There was much truth in Mr. Morley's observation, and that he perfectly agreed with him."

Then she heard her uncle again express

his reluctance that his nephew should go at Ernest's expense, but no offer was made to defray it; and then, after expressing his thanks, as though Thornton had bestowed upon him some great favour, Morley rose, saying, "He would go and tell Ralph, for he knew what pleasure his uncle's permission would give him."

And he did tell him, turning off the other's speedy inquiry relative to his pecuniary share in the compact, by saying, resolutely, "That all that had been settled between him and the Doctor, and that Ralph had nothing now to do but to prepare for their trip."

Rose heard the door close after Morley, and then, as she expected, the smooth voice glided in again,—

"A very generous young man indeed."

"Very," returned Thornton. "He's a good fellow; the trip may do the young urchin good."

"If it were any other place I should say so, decidedly; but Paris is a terrible temptation for one like Mr. Ralph."

And Rose could see with the eyes of her imagination the solemn shake of the head accompanying those words.

"Why the devil didn't you say so just now then, if you think so? You seemed to agree with Morley in everything," cried the Doctor, with sudden ire.

"Pardon me, my dear friend; I agreed that Paris had much in it that was injurious as well as good. Young men like Mr. Morley can withstand temptation—good, obedient sons, who will act according to the advice of their elders. I was only afraid that Mr. Ralph, with his very perverse disposition, might trespass; but let us hope not."

"Just out with what you mean! Why, in God's name, do you always dodge in that roundabout way? Why couldn't you say so just now? You mean, you wouldn't let him go?" And Thornton's voice grew loud with wrath.

"Really, my dear sir, I didn't like to interfere; I was not asked for my opinion.

But I thought that after all the base ingratitude of that young man for your unspeakable kindness since his infancy ——”

“He shall not say one word more, the treacherous hypocrite!” thought Rose, who had risen from the sofa during this latter speech, breathless with indignation. “Is this the way he sows the seeds of dissension and points the dagger in the dark?”

“O uncle!” she said aloud, passing through the doorway, with a well-feigned yawn—“I am so glad! surely I’ve not been dreaming!—but a little while ago didn’t I hear you say you would let Ralph go to Paris with Ernest Morley? I think I’ve been to sleep”—with a gape—“but how kind of you! He said he never should be thankful enough if he could go.” (This was not quite invented by Miss Lindsay, as Eve had informed her of Ralph’s great desire to go to Paris, of which he had acquainted both her and Mrs. Thornton.) “I am sure it will do him a world of good, and make him

quite different"—with a withering glance at Blight.

"And so you think so, Miss Impudence, do you?" asked the Doctor.

"Oh! yes, it will be the making of him—don't you think so, Mr. Blight?"

"I trust so, my dear young lady."

"Why, you change like a weathercock," said Thornton, with a scowl; "just now you were all against his going."

"Oh, Mr. Blight could not mean that, I am sure," exclaimed Rose, "you must have misunderstood him."

"Partly, my dear Miss Lindsay; your uncle is so wonderfully acute—his perception so vivid—I only meant that there was a chance which might turn for the better or the worse, as there is in everything; but Mr. Morley is the person of all others to be Mr. Ralph's guide, I daresay; he seems so very staid and thoughtful for his age. A change works wonders very often."

And so the discussion ended; and John appearing with the announcement that

“coffee” was waiting, Rose, again looking all the contempt she felt, which was of no small portion, sailed by Mr. Blight (who bowed very obsequiously as she passed him), and led the way to the drawing-room. The bright flush upon Eve’s cheek still lingered, and as Rose approached her, and kissed her pearly brow, she thought she had never seen her look so lovely.

Mrs. Thornton whispered, “Doesn’t she look much better?”

But while Rose nodded assent, her eye sought Eve’s painfully. That brilliant glare—was that the sparkle of health? That radiant light too thrilling for the gazer! She was seated by her dear Aunt Rachel; and Rose, placing herself on the other side, watched the play of the sunny tresses at each motion of the gentle head, and they shone to-night like very “threads of gold”—yes, she watched with that intensity of interest experienced alone by those who are gifted as with a spiritual sight, who can trace in the dim and undefined, a “pathway beyond

the present" into the "fatal shadowy future," distinct from things perceptible to human sense—a mental foreknowledge of existence yet in embryo—of things untold, unthought of, yet to come. But the earnest gaze of the observer was now arrested by the sweet smile of the observed, and the question of "What was she thinking about so deeply?" Rose, to turn the subject, related in an undertone the meeting with the poor sailor; and while Mrs. Thornton and Eve listened to the touching account of his poverty and distress, the Doctor and Blight were engaged in discussing the merits and demerits of houses and land property, of bargains, losses, and insolvent tenants. The sailor's case was also mentioned by Thornton in the course of the conversation, but in so light a manner as to wound the ear of Rose, who wondered how anybody could speak and act so differently. It was true he desired "time to be given to the widow;" but as soon as Blight commenced a description of the utter wantonness, and drunkenness, and deception of

“Gin Way’s most unhappy and hardened race,” among which Dick Harding and his desolate mother ranked the foremost, these transient feelings of “pity and of mercy” took flight, and his mind descended into its more coveted frame of “sordid avarice and niggardly despotism ;” but we would have it remembered that “the former” might have held as powerful a sway—might have shone the more brilliantly in that deeply hidden cell—that carefully guarded harbour of thoughts and affections—“his heart”—had an opposite current borne it on its way. As it was, the meandering windings were too intricate for those “perishable jewels,” and in the course of the subtle stream, their lustre waned and fled, leaving the casket bare, but for the scum remaining—like the emerald leaf in early summer—its healthy sap dried up and its beauty withered by the deadening influence of nature’s insignificant yet fell destroyer.

Soon after tea the Doctor, as usual, took up his paper, and Blight, who was a pro-

fessed chess-player, placed the board between Eve and himself, requesting her to play. She declined more than once, pleading fatigue; but the Doctor, looking off the "Money Market" for a moment, told her not to be a "little silly," which she considered hint enough of his wishes, and, therefore, complied, looking, as Rose whispered to Aunt Rachel, regularly "taken in." The game began, and Eve, who was not much of a player, would have soon caused a *finale*, but Blight evidently played his very worst, giving her undue advantage, and Rose standing behind her chair, advising and abetting, the two very soon mated Mr. Blight and crushed him, which is an achievement not often accomplished. He sued for another game, and in spite of Rose's remark, that Eve looked "blighted," it proceeded.

The two young men were still in Ralph's studio; they had not made their appearance at all in the drawing-room, and Miss Lindsay, tired at last of watching the "worm

feed upon the cheek," moved off to the piano, and, in spite of her uncle's "Oh! lor," amused herself and her aunt, and one of the chess-players at least, by her performance thereon. At length ten o'clock struck; Mr. Blight rose to take his leave, and Mr. Morley entered to do the same, accompanied by the Artist. Rose overheard the whispered "Thank your uncle, Ralph," and marked the contemptuous shake of the proud head in reply.

"So the game is ended. Who's the winner?" asked Thornton.

"Oh, dear, Miss Ending; she has played beautifully to-night. Getting on nicely," quoth Blight.

"I think you've given it to her; that's about the truth," put in the Doctor.

"Yes, '*Give the devil his due*,'" said Rose, emphatically.

"What the 'devil' do you mean?" demanded the Doctor, turning angrily towards her.

"Nothing particular, dear uncle; only

I thought if Mr. Blight needed anything in this world, it was 'DEW!' Good night."

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